

The Princess Gam-Sar



Andrew Klarmann



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The Princess Gan-Sar

Mary Magdalene

BY

ANDREW KLARMANN

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Book first

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THE PRINCESS OF GAN-SAR

CHAPTER I ON THE HIGHWAY

GENNESAR was the most fertile and the most populous region in all the land of Palestine. It stretched along the western coast of the Sea of Galilee, and reached up towards the foot of the dark mountain chain of Asamon and its manifold and widely scattering spurs. Along the Lake twelve cities, each with not less than twenty thousand inhabitants, opened their gates almost upon each other throughout the narrow strip of about six miles wide and thirteen miles long. Fresh and brilliant bloom and green, in bowers and gardens, garlanded these stations of joyous activity. In those days Gennesar was a land of play and plenty, by nature dowered, and by art enhanced, with what may cheer and charm the heart of man. To-day it is a dreary solitude, which has preserved, not indeed the traces even of its ancient prosperity, but the dust only of its splendid past, the sad reminder of a sadder blight.

It was a morning full of the fragrance of the fields and plains, of bloom and sunshine; soft as the folds of fleecy robes, and bright with the melting glory of an everlastingly clear azure firmament. The fields were alive with busy workers, sowing and reaping side by side, gathering flowers

and fruits; olives, grapes, pomegranates, the fruits of the citron, figs and dates, from trees and vines already blooming afresh with the promise of a new yield: and the lusty clatter of heavily laden carts was on the highways.

And withal there was no noise. From one spot or another, just as it pleased the playful mood of the light morning wind wafting from the lake to snatch them up, resounded the sweetly solemn chants of the maidens, or the earnest psalms and hymns of the men and youths, bent upon their work with ease and grace.

The group of travelers in festive garb, that moved down among the bowers of the roadside, only lent more grace and gayety to this scene of peaceful diligence. They walked briskly by, under the witching spell of the morning, although engaged in animated conversation. One, however, who moved in the midst of them, did not seem to share the general interest.

He was tall, taller than every one of his ten or twelve companions, with a short brown beard, and soft brown hair that rambled in luminous curls over his shoulders; his features, clear as features lured from marble under the deft hand of a master, soft, delicate, manly; such as would be sought as the expression of sovereign tranquillity and noble independence of soul. The charm of youth beamed from his eyes; yet not that fire which bespeaks defiance: it was a quiet glow; the majesty of gentleness and good-will, rather than the pert audacity of self-confidence.

As they passed a bevy of maidens, who were on the way toward Dalmanutha, carrying flower-trimmed baskets of fruit on their heads, one of the olive-hued, modest faces saluted the comely stranger with a smile of delight, while the other damsels contented themselves with pursuing him with admiring glances. He was scarcely out of the reach of their eager voices, when one asked, and then another, of the bold little one, with a quiver of jealousy in every note,

whether she knew the beautiful man? "It is the new Prophet," she replied, wondering at the ignorance of the maidens from the Southern Coast; "have you not heard of him? I have not been long about these parts, and yet I have heard your wise men predict with sober face that he shall be the long sought deliverer of the Nation from its bondage. He carries himself like a king, asking no man's pleasure and giving no man offense; an humble man, as David was, the shepherd boy, who slew the boasting giant. But yet a man of mettle, they consent. They said of him: 'Let him outgrow the narrow views of the village artisan, and ye shall behold him wax bold to raise his hand against our foe. His meekness is but the meekness of the cub, his gentleness, the complacency of the lion amid his own tribe. Test him, and watch his meek eyes snap and his fine nostrils distend!' So highly do your sires rate him — and ye have not heard of him?"

But by this time a group of women, evidently following the men ahead, had come upon them, and the same maiden, pointing out one of them, of graceful, slender build, with face as pure as the first white spring rose, said with reverence: "It is his mother."

Thamar did not bow to her, nor smile; but she threw down her basket in the road, and turning away from her companions without a word, ran after the women, and cast herself into the dust at Mary's feet. Mary tenderly raised her up, and kissed her, and the dark child departed in her company.

The others stood speechless with astonishment at the impetuous mite. The sight of that lovely woman, with face full of heavenly calm, had also impressed them deeply. It seemed as strange as a vision. And now the impulsive little creature ran away after her without a moment's consideration!

It was no sacrifice for Thamar, it is true; she had arrived

among the harvesters only a week before, from Magedan, where, according to her own narrative, she had been a handmaid to the "Princess of Gennesar," but whence she fled, she maintained, on account of the noise of the mansion. She was an orphan, and a stranger in Israel. It might be to her comfort, to follow the new Star, or at least it would be a blessing for her to enjoy the motherly affection of that gentle mother of the Prophet; but it was so unusual!

In such vein the wondering maidens mused; and their scattered conversation concerning her unceremonious departure was but an exchange of such thought, sprinkled with exclamations, and monosyllabic comments on "the audacity of the chick."

But the narrative of the dark stranger had refreshed their memories. They had gathered bits and shreds of rumors about him, and forgotten them; one remembered that she had heard he had come out of Egypt in the days of Quirinius, the legate of Syria, who first collected the tribute of the Emperor in their land. Another recalled the story of a boatsman: "One day, in the gray of the early morn," she said, "a levite in Jerusalem espied a man standing on the pinnacle of the Temple, on the very edge of the coping; but instead of pitching down headlong into the abyss, he disappeared in a dark cloud. And when that levite came face to face with this Prophet of Nazareth at Capernaum, a few days ago, he upbraided him to his face with being a magician, for that it were he that had stood on the roof of the Temple, and had ridden away on a cloud."

"And what did the Prophet answer him, pray?" one inquired dubiously.

"Nothing," the other replied; "he walked away, to let the levite stand in the shame of his misplaced zeal."

There was not another in the group, who took the story seriously; "sailors do so readily indulge in fanciful tales," they remarked: "go to: thou art so simple!"

While they were indulging in banter and repartee at the expense of the pouting "simple one," they heard the clatter of hoofs in the distance. The relations between Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee, and Hareth, his Arabian father-in-law, were strained, and hence small bands of troops, or, rather, licensed marauders, were constantly moving about the country, growing in number and arrogance with the moon. The maidens hurriedly fled toward the nearest thicket. But notwithstanding their agility, they would have been caught had there been soldiers on the road; they had scarcely lifted their cloaks for securer running, when one of the riders was upon them, a woman in flesh and blood, and arrayed in the splendor of the proverbial Queen of Sheba.

For a moment the gay damsels were dumb with astonishment, but after a hurried inspection of the fair rider, their wonderment was turned into anger and contempt. Here was a young maiden of the nation, a daughter of Israel, attired in the luxurious raiment of the Gentiles, and mounted on a silk-trapped Egyptian steed; the Jewess as proudly oblivious of the proprieties of maidenly attire as one of the heathen goddesses, whose statues the sailors said were set up in Tiberias, and other cities of the pagans. Her body was robed in bespangled silk, closely clinging where it would enhance, and gaping curiously over fine, fragrant linen, where it would reveal the contour of the finely modeled figure. Over the shoulders and part of the upper arms was draped a diaphanous veil of gold-threaded byssus,¹ of such fine weaving as to resemble a halo of sunlight more realistically than a fabric made by the hand of man. Down over the body flowed an abundance of fine silk, and the feet were

¹ Exceedingly fine threaded linen.

encased in saffron-colored bootlets, with strings of pearls around the tops. As for the rest of the raiment, there were traces, not to be mistaken, of a snow-white linen tunic, deftly ribbed and plaited, out of which she thrust her shapely feet with the stark impertinence of her youthful conceit. About the waist was laid a sash of silver-woven silk, plainly visible beneath the white mantle of fine lamb's wool, which enveloped, with a bare pretense at covering, so little of the dainty woman as she did not consider an enhancement of her beauty.

The arms also were bare, except for the gold bracelets, and a jeweled clasp on the left shoulder. The small and delicately molded head was framed in a profusion of nut-brown, lustrous hair, which was gathered under a veil of white, and encircled by a dainty diadem of gold and precious stones; the neck was ornamented with a double string of Italian coral beads, the roseate gleam of which spread a pretty blush over the ivory delicacy of the skin.

Miriam appeared to these simple maids as a queen; but they would rather compare her to the haughty Jezabel than to the Shulamite, and their first suppressed exclamation bespoke the loathing of their guileless souls: "Miriam, the Sinner!" they gasped, almost into her face.

Miriam had acquired an unenviable reputation all the country round. Her mansion by the Lake was the trysting-place for the Roman officers and officials as well as for the courtiers of Herod, and she had so far lost the sense of reverence for paternal law and custom, that she returned the visits of her guests in gay company, at the unclean city of Tiberias, at Caesarea, Antioch, and Alexandria, and rejoiced at the dances and carousals of the Gentiles in honor of their gods. It was said of her, that once she even attended the sacrifices in the temple of Apollo at Caesarea. It might not have been sympathy with the idolatrous worship, but a mood of impious recklessness, or simply curiosity,

that had prompted her to commit this act of treason against the religious traditions and sentiments of her people. But these traditions were so sacred, and these sentiments so tender, that on the one side, the pagan seducers of the wicked Jewess had gloried in their success of having led her astray, and on the other, the Jews, who were settled in the pagan city, having been informed of her contempt of the inviolable heritage of their fathers, had raised their voices in concerted execration against the traitoress, and had reported her crime to the religious heads in Jerusalem.

This rumor alone sufficed to put the ban on Miriam, and although nothing worse than the reproach of her wicked associations, levity of manner, and luxury of dress was trailing at her heels, for the very prominence accorded her by her youth and dazzling beauty, her education, her wealth, and the unquestionable honor of her family, she was hailed or cursed far and wide as "Miriam, the Sinner." Nor was the epithet an injury; her life was a standing scandal throughout the length and breadth of Gennesar. She could not plead her youth in the sight of her people in extenuation of her faults; for she lived the life of an adept in refined wickedness.

Still there was an air of unconscious pride about her person, that commanded the respect of even the unwilling, for her exuberance without filth, her thoroughness without abandon, her greatness amid ruin, her beauty without vileness, and, above all, her constancy against the ubiquitous tempter. She was lavish with her gifts to the poor, indulgent toward the erring, generous to forgive, and had never been known to use language worse than that of the philosophers — which was considered sinful, forsooth, even in Galilee. She was a fresh mountain stream tumbling down in sparkling cascades from the shady groves above, and racing through the plains, stirring up the mud of the soft banks, and rioting along its course unmindful of the end

in the sands of the desert; but once that it is brought to a quiet flow, it will drop the mud, and empty into the bosom of the sea regenerated to its pristine limpidity, to find rest, and disappear in the quiet majesty of the ocean.

Miriam parried her mare, and noticing the pouting lips and threatening eyes of the young maidens, smiled indulgently, parting her lips and her teeth with glee over the horror in the faces of her captives. But they betrayed also curiosity and envy enough to stand their ground.

"Will you tell me, my maidens," she said blandly, "whether you have seen Thamar, the 'dark one'?" And as the pouting maids remained obstinate, she proceeded, not heeding their evident exasperation: "She is as brown and tempting as the ripe olive, and her hair is spun of the threads of the veil of night; she must have journeyed through this region. My servants have tracked her to Dalmanutha, and thence to these fields. She is a stranger in the land: speak now, pray! Be not afraid of the 'Sinner'!"

At last one of them deigned to speak, while she was still surveying the fair "Sinner."

"We have seen her; she has been with us for a week."

And another added, "But she has gone away with the Saints."

"Whither, my fair one?"

Now the young women had surrounded Miriam, and were industriously examining the costly trappings of her mount, and, with sidelong glances, the fabrics and arrangement of her robes. Some blushed deep, but still they would venture another glance; one even dared to press her finger-tip to the skin above the ankle, presumably to ascertain that the fair one was not wearing velvet against the sun's rays. Miriam no sooner felt the stealthy touch, than she bent down, and tapped the maid's cheek, at the same time drawing up her feet under the hem of the mantle. They were so intent upon their pleasurable occupation that they had

forgotten Miriam's question after her deserter. She repeated it, and now, after they had satisfied their curiosity a little, they all spoke together:

"Down the road, toward Cana, with a group of women, to follow the Prophet; they cannot be far; and Thamar is with his mother."

"I am on the way to Cana myself," said Miriam, with a soberness so plain, and so unexpected, that the quick-witted maidens of Gennesar could not but notice the change of mood instantly. "There is to be a wedding," she continued, "of relatives of mine: If she is bound for Cana, I shall soon take her back into my service. She is a good child, a proselyte, ye should know; but a religious fanatic."

"Indeed," replied one of the curious maids, "thou shouldst also be one, and follow him; he is a very comely man," and ran away laughing.

Miriam gazed after her, angrily at first; but her gaze grew fixed and solemn, and reached out farther and farther over the head of the fugitive scoffer, to the distant hills of the North. Presently the other maids also left her with a half-hearted sneer, so that she was alone on the road. Had it not been for the impatient prancing of her mare, she would not have become aware of the arrival of her escort and retinue, who had leisurely sauntered up.

"Judas," she addressed the leader, "I will not go to the wedding; but thou, go, and take to them my gift. I will return to Magdalum with two of thy men and three of the maids. Bring Thamar back with thee." Then she put a large purse into his hand, and turned the head of her mount.

"As my gracious mistress listeth," replied Judas with a most respectful obeisance, and rode on, seeing that two men and three maids had volunteered to conduct their mistress home. She had not waited for a reply, but was already on the way in the opposite direction.

Miriam had not proceeded far, when she overtook her exasperated admirers of a little while before. She was quickly regaining composure and animation; as soon as she could dismiss the oppressive thought of being nearly trapped by the Prophet of Nazareth, with the rumors of whose unwonted sayings and doings the very atmosphere of Gennesar was fraught, her joy of living and loving returned. That Man of Nazareth, the intimate friend of the fanatical preacher of the Jordan, was the one man in the world, whose presence she dreaded. She feared John, and hated him; but not enough to keep her busy tongue from ridiculing his austerity of life and rigor of doctrine. Some of her daily companions, of the Sadducees and Herodians, who had journeyed down to hear John, had related to her how the hermit manifested kindness, and ministered encouragement to the sinners, publicans, and soldiers, but berated without mercy the Pharisees and Sadducees, and, in general, all who did not herd with the rabble. "A generation of vipers" he denounced the Pharisees, assuring them, the most zealous defenders of the law and cult of the nation, that "God would rather make children of Abraham out of the stones of the desert" than accept them as worthy sons of the Father of the Covenant.

A man with views so antiquated, so traitorous, a back number of a prophet, a belated Elijah, no; such a man is a stumbling block to the progress of the age! To reprove the rich, the elegant, the cream of the refined, and to coddle the publicans and soldiers, the oppressors of the whole land! Is there sin in the wearing of fine garments, in sumptuous feasting? We have the opportunity and leisure to garner the flowers of life: but we also feed the hungry, and clothe the naked; we send our tithes to the Temple of Jerusalem; we keep the annual fasts and feasts: why, thought Miriam, should we not feast after the fasts, and fast after the feasts? A seasonable interruption in the

rounds of pleasure lends zest to the appetite at their resumption.

There was rebellion in her heart, a rearing-up against the goad of a nobler persuasion. But the charm of the riotous life, which had become so dear to her, was too strong to be broken by the call of a voice half stifled by constant contradiction and abuse. For the first time in her career of debauchery she felt dissatisfied with her slender courage.

Rousing from her unpleasant reverie, she observed that the maidens, stepping gayly along the edge of the road, were jestingly arranging their headgear in imitation of her own, twisting vines into their hair and veils in place of her own golden circlet. And now they stopped, and depositing their baskets in the grass, made ludicrous attempts at imitating her own folly of dress.

“Shame, shame!” she cried in anger and confusion, as she came upon them unawares; for she had not given her frivolity a thought, but that it pleased her to affect the levity of the pagans. “Shame, shame on your heads!” she repeated with bitter indignation, and threw down her own cloak over her feet. Then she rudely jerked at the reins of her mare, and hastily rode away. But she heard the derisive shout in her rear:

“Jesus of Nazareth is in pursuit; run, Miriam, lest he take thee away!”

Miriam hung her head, and wept for anger and bitterness of heart. She could not silence the voice that cried out from the depths of her soul: “Miriam, thou hast scandalized the little ones!”

CHAPTER II

IN THE CHAMBER

A WEEK later, Judas returned to Magedan from the wedding, and after the beasts were stabled, and the travelers refreshed, he was bidden wait upon his mistress. It was evening, and she had retreated to a quiet grove in the gardens, where amid a profusion of green and bloom, in the shadow of sycamores, olives, and nut trees, a comfortable garden house lay concealed. A balustrade of short marble pillars, over which rose slender columns of white stone supporting a trellised roof of cedar wood, enclosed a circular space ample enough for the comfortable seating of forty or fifty persons. Marble slabs, fitted into the base of the balustrade, served as benches; and a large slab, resting on four rows of low stout columns, formed the table, upon which, in the center, rested the basin of a fountain. The water of this perennial spring was brought down from the mountains in an aqueduct thirty miles long. Miriam often made her ablutions in this bower, and was very careful to use only the purest water. It was said that Solomon himself had laid out this garden, and had made it a retreat of his three hundred queens.

This cozy nook now often witnessed the gatherings of the most exclusive officials of Tiberias, and the neighboring estates, Galilean Jews, Greeks, and Romans, at symposia, no less redolent with the fragrance of the old wines of Gennesar, than resplendent with the rare beauty of Grecian women, and the brilliant wit of Grecian sophists and Roman rhetoricians.

The seclusion of this retreat was complete. Toward the east, the spacious garden, in which it was situated, sloped down to the beach of the Lake; its opposite border touched the foot of the densely wooded hills, and toward the north and the south the wide range was covered with orchards and vineyards. The olive groves extended from the garden house, as their center, in every direction for a mile, so that the outlying vineyards encircled them as with a wide silver-shimmering wreath.

Miriam had spent the week of her steward's absence in thoughtful silence, not conversing with anyone, except the overseers of the harvesters and fruit gatherers, for the purpose of directing their work. She was still smarting under the experience of the encounter with the precocious maids of Dalmanutha, so humiliating for the reason that they had so rudely, as she thought, mimicked her appearance. The reproach of her conscience with the scandal which she had given those simple children of the country had insensibly worn off under the attitude of polite reserve which she was wont to observe toward "sentimental emotions." But there was a sting that was persistently penetrating deeper into her heart: the taunt which the inconsiderate young women had hurled after her with their "Jesus of Nazareth." And the remembrance of her headlong flight from that dreaded name had in the last days become galling in the extreme. Try as she would to silence it, that cry would ring in her ears by day and by night. Nay; last night it disturbed her rest: she saw that mysterious Man of Nazareth gathering a band of sturdy Galileans, husbandmen, and fishermen, and marching them upon her mansion. They took the house by storm, laid low its ramparts and turrets, destroyed her orchards, killed her servants, and searched her out in a subterranean passage, to deliver her to their angry leader. He seated her on his charger, and bore her away with him. But suddenly, as she thought she awoke, she beheld

him nailed to a cross for his victory over her; darkness surrounded him, and the jeers and maledictions of all Jerusalem surged like a grimy flood about him,—while she knelt at his feet, embracing them with tender love, and wetting her hair with the hot torrents of his blood, which flowed from many wounds. Now, at the vivid recollection of her dream, she runs her fingers through her hair, flowing loose over her shoulders and bosom, and examines them with a timorous smile, which bespeaks at once the sweetness and the dread of the recollection.

"I felt no fear when he bore me away," she continued her thought aloud; "my heart was pierced with a fiery love of him, and I loved him still when he hung on the cross, bleeding and dying. What have I done that I should fear him when I am awake!"

The last words she uttered loud enough for Judas to hear. She had arisen from the stone seat, and was about to leave the enclosure, when Judas drew near. Resuming her seat, she motioned the steward to a place at her feet. He knitted his brows with momentary displeasure at the humiliation, but the next instant he reclined at her feet with apparent ease and satisfaction.

Judas was a burly man, broad of shoulder, deep of chest, tall, and well-knit, with a massive head, short, curly beard, and hair of a decidedly auburn hue; his eyes dark and wandering, and his nose strong and straight, except for the small bony hump on the bridge. He was a typical Judean from the borders of Idumea, a neighbor to the home of Herod the Great, and of the reigning Tetrarch.

"What report hast thou to make, Judas?" Miriam opened the interview.

"Of everything," he replied cheerfully, "that my noble mistress may wish to learn."

"Hast thou brought with thee Thamar, my pet?"

"Aye, I have brought the little pest, but at the displeasure

of the women who had given her refuge on the way. She was admitted to the wedding feast."

"And the Man of Nazareth tolerated her presence?"

"The Man of Nazareth tolerates anybody and anything. He even spoke to her, and commanded her to return to thee, and to stay with thee."

"Dost think he knows me, Judas?"

"Who does not know thee in Gennesar! — Pardon me," he inserted hastily, as Miriam manifested her indignation at the brutal remark; "pardon me; I meant not to insinuate evil"; and in his confusion over the unpardonable mistake of hinting at her evil reputation, he laid his hand upon her knee with tactless presumption, and looked up into her eyes with a grin, intended to be an apology, but spreading into a broad arrogant leer over his half-open mouth. But Miriam haughtily brushed aside his hand, and moving away from him, bade him proceed, and give a connected report of the progress of the feast.

Judas realized instantly that he had grievously offended his mistress, whom he had hitherto not considered oversensitive in the matter of intercourse with men, and upon whose indulgency he had presumed the more on this occasion, for having been bidden to such intimate converse, in the depth of this secret retreat, and in the shelter of the shades of eve, alone with the loveliest woman in the land. It was the first time that he enjoyed the distinction of private communication with the fastidious woman. Often he had resented his exclusion from her intimate society, which was enjoyed by men far beneath himself, he thought, in merit and manly parts. But he had trespassed, where he had expected, in his foolish conceit, that he need but make advances to be accepted. He was not in the least prepared for this rebuff, and resolved to make good his lapse by flattery, to which no woman of his acquaintance had ever remained insensible. He proceeded:

"When I departed at thy behest without thy cheering presence, I rode fast to overtake Thamar, that I might earn thy thanks. But the women who harbored the fugitive had taken a footpath, which winds around and across the range of hillocks on the road of Dalmanutha, and rejoins the road of Tiberias and Damascus at Ziddim, shortening the route by more than an hour. When we met them at Sepphoris, I demanded that they deliver to me thy servant, but Thamar clung in desperation to the mother of the Nazarene, and would not be separated from her. Not wishing to be too rude, I placed Omer as a guard over her, and proceeded to Cana with the rest. Not far from the town I overtook Jesus and his followers, mostly former disciples of John.

"The Nazarene wields great power over them through his new doctrine. He is not affiliated to the Pharisees, nor the Sadducees, nor yet to the Chasidim. He lives like a Pharisee, forgives like a Sadducee, and loves the people like the Chasidim. He drinks wine, feasts and fasts, praises, reproves and prays; but with such moderation that all are impressed with his honesty and uprightness. If I mistake not, he courts the good will of the populace; for what ulterior purpose I know not, unless, perhaps, to prepare them for his leadership: he sheweth little love for the rulers."

Miriam impatiently interrupted him: "Give me not, I pray, thy own impressions of the man; let his actions speak, and his own words, that I may form my own opinion. A man is not always what he seems to some. Proceed!"

Judas had thrust the ends of his beard into his mouth with an impatient motion of the hand, signaling his chagrin; and now when his mouth opened with disgust, the hair, wet with his spittle, slowly straightened out, like that of a cur bested in a fray. It was plain that he and his mistress were friends no more, if they had ever been. But he suppressed his smothering rage, and continued in a seemingly even mood:

"If thou wouldest judge the Nazarene by his speech, thou must content thyself with scant material. He speaketh little, unless by his instructions to the people. He will pick a flower, drooping from the heat and the dust of the road, and hold forth on the intolerable burden of the Thora, that 'Moses did not place the yoke upon the shoulders of the fathers, but that the burden was imposed by the Scribes.' He will stop beneath a twittering sparrow, and tell his followers that 'his heavenly Father hath care of it, and that He hath a hundredfold greater care of them, if they will seek the Kingdom of God and His justice.' He will wave his hand toward the harvest field, and tell the eager crowds: 'The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few'; and in like manner in many things. No man may understand his allusions; but his disciples look forward to an explanation and unfolding of his doctrine. He is a most mysterious man: we observe our law without complaint; we walk in the justice of our paternal ordinances; we garner our harvests, and drink our cup with joy: and yet his words are not idle sound in the ears of the people; they expect great things of him."

Judas stopped, and scanned the earnest face above him for a trace of returning kindness. But Miriam still sat in the attitude of an attentive listener, her head inclined forward, and her gaze upon her hands, which lay folded in her lap. After a short pause, she looked at him coldly and asked:

"Judas, why dost thou halt?"

"Because, what I would yet tell thee," he replied with feigned timidity, "may fetch another rebuke from thy pretty lips."

She overlooked the clumsy compliment, and bade him continue.

Then Judas resumed with a fresh attempt at conciliating her favor:

"Of the wedding feast, there is not much to tell. Thy cousins are plain and simple people, and my heart rejoiced that thou wert spared the indignity of their company. I whiled away my time with rallying Simon Bar Jonah, the fisherman, one of the Nazarene's admirers, a fiery man, without polish or prudence, a whirlwind and spit-fire, but gifted with a ready tongue. What else I know concerning the new Prophet I have heard from Simon. But I nearly overlooked an incident which happened on the third day of the festivities. When they had no more wine, the Nazarene, they claim, caused wine to flow from the stones of ablution; and the wine was good." Judas smacked his lips in testimony of the truth.

"Wert thou not at the feast to witness the wonderful deed?" Miriam inquired testily; "hast thou not done my cousins honor after the custom of their house?"

Judas was taken aback, and a flood of blood mounted his temples and forehead.

"I — hm — I had taken out my horse for a jaunt, and on my return Simon swore to me that the Nazarene had changed water into wine without sign and ceremony; hence it may be true, notwithstanding my absence." Judas had stammered out this illogical account with the manifest intention of diverting suspicion from his doings at Cana, and Miriam knew that he lied.

At that embarrassing moment they heard the flutter of linen and the patter of light, hurried footsteps; Thamar, the "dark," came flying upon them; and throwing herself on her knees, and burying her head in Miriam's lap, she sobbed aloud:

"O my dear mistress, forgive me! I will never more flee from thy house."

Miriam drew her up into her arms, and brushing the dark strands out of the childish face with her hand, consoled her:

"Why didst thou run away, thou foolish chick? Have I done thee harm? I did not scold thee even when thou didst deserve."

"Thou art kind, good mistress mine; but the wicked people, whom thou dost make thy guests, drove me away. I could no longer bear their evil talk. Let me be about thee always, and keep those cravens from thy table."

"Didst thou tell the Prophet of these men?"

"I did, — forgive me, pray; but he was not angry at thee; he was sad, and his eyes were moist when he bade me return to thee, and stay with thee, until thou also follow him!"

Miriam was so startled at the prospect of the Princess of Gennesar following the poor visionary of Nazareth, that she sprang to her feet, frightened, as if someone had struck her a blow in the face. Thamar, who had nestled in the folds of her veil, not prepared for the sudden separation, pulled it off, and almost threw her mistress on the ground. Judas left without a salutation. Thamar stood by, helpless and wondering at the terror of her mistress, who had ever been known to have as stout a heart as few men could boast. She did not understand that anything she had said could have roused a storm in the breast of her mistress.

Miriam stood a long time in silent interior conflict; but at last, casting a look of helplessness at Thamar, she turned slowly into the path that led to the rear gate of the court, crossing a bridge over the brook Middol, the waters of which irrigated the fields and vineyards of the Magdalene possessions. Thamar followed at a respectful distance. But soon the mistress invited her with a silent gesture of the hand to come to her side, and locking arms with her, walked on in silence. After a while, however, Miriam disengaged her arm, and standing still, took Thamar's hand, and pressed it upon her heart. The child did not understand the riot which she felt beating beneath her palm. She

looked up quizzically into Miriam's eyes; and what the wildly pulsing blood could not tell her, she read from the pallid face. With the anxiety of a wounded fawn she raised herself on her toes, and putting both hands to the cheeks of her mistress, she stammered with deep compassion:

"O good mistress mine, have I hurt thee? Pray, pray, forgive an ignorant child! Why have I said anything at all to thee! Thou art suffering — speak to me; say to me but one word of thy goodness!"

Miriam inclined her head, and kissed the anxious little face; and the "chick" put her arms about her noble mistress's neck and wept for joy.

"Come, Thamar," Miriam encouraged her; "thou must tell me more of the wedding. We will retire to my room and lock the doors, and thou shalt tell me all that thou hast seen."

When they entered the large, royally appointed room, Thamar treading on tip-toe for joy and elation; she had never seen such wealth and splendor. The damask curtains at the windows were drawn, and the glamour of the vases and statues and tables was enhanced by the soft light of three pendent lamps, which glowed with the ruby light of the oil cups like the dawn of the East. Miriam also lit a candlestick of seven lights, which stood on an onyx pillar, seven feet high, and served to reveal the exquisite colors and designs of the tapestries, with which the walls were hung all about.

This room was Miriam's sanctuary. None but her maid Hannah had ever been permitted to set foot over its threshold day or night, and much as Judas had been prowling and prying, he had at even always found a locked door under the outer hangings. Miriam knew the danger of her loose conduct; she would not be alone even in her sleep; Hannah would always be with her. The windows of this room were barred with iron; not so much, perhaps, as a defence

against dastardly intrusions, as against the marauders, with whom the country swarmed. This room was the treasury of Miriam in more senses than one. Hither she would often retire after days and nights spent abroad in revelry, to bemoan her excesses, and vow repentance a hundred times without effect.

When they were seated, Hannah, the maid into whose exclusive care this room was given, brought a crock of sweet wine, of which Miriam made the child drink from a silver cup; but she herself did not drink. She touched her lips to the cup, however, as a pledge of love to her "chick."

Miriam had undergone a succession of such painful emotions within the past week, and this evening, as might have overpowered a less courageous mind, and turned a less sensitive one to mockery and abandon. But like Samson of old, who pulled the house down over his own head to crush his enemies,¹ she would now hear her sentence of damnation, or be freed forever from the imposition of the dread of a man, who had stepped in her way like a giant, and challenged her to deadly combat over the possession of all that she held dear in the world. She had from her childhood heard mysterious rumors of this Man of Nazareth. They had told her that at his birth the heavens were opened, and the angels of God heralded his advent; that Herod, the Idumean, put the babes of Bethlehem to death, in order to kill among them "the newborn King of the Jews," after whom a troop of strange Eastern sages had made inquiry at the royal court. She had been told that at the age of twelve years he was disputing with the doctors and the scribes in the Temple. But like a comet he had suddenly disappeared from the horizon. What had then been a matter of daily disputes among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as also among the women of her own native town of Bethania, had later paled into legend and fable,

¹ Judges, 16, 26-30.

and the repetition of it was considerably discounted even among the simple peasantry; and the people of means and class laughed it out of possibility: he had vanished so completely, that even his name, and that of the town of his origin, had gone into oblivion.

She had often, as a child, simple and innocent, when listening to her pious mother's recital of those wonderful events, longed to know what had been the fate of this child of miracles, who was surely destined to become a great prophet before the Lord of hosts—if not the Great King, the Messiah; but no one could be found to satisfy her curiosity. Her mother died, and had not seen him; and when she herself, at the age of fifteen, left the paternal roof to take possession of the estate of Magedan in Galilee, these pleasing memories of her childhood were soon effaced by new and unwonted impressions. Her pious old nurse, and a few other servants who had followed their pet to Magedan, she had soon sent back to Bethania, because of their anxiety for her welfare, and their reproaches of her liberties. Then, when suddenly, at a banquet in the palace of Herod at Tiberias, for which she had with some scruples accepted the first invitation, she heard them tell of the commotion aroused among the witnesses of his baptism by John, and of John's prophecy, that "this is the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world," her fancy readily returned to the impressions of her earlier days.

She had seen the Nazarene only once, at Capernaum, in the garden of Simon, the fisherman, of whom Judas had given her to-day such an unsightly picture. She was then returning with some boon companions from a reveling expedition into the city, when an officer, who had seen Jesus at the Jordan, pointed him out to her. The soldier was still in the toils of the generous wine, and forgetting the obligations of public propriety, raised his mailed hand in his

direction, and said in a loud, unsteady voice: "That man in the white tunic is the 'Lamb' of John," and added with a coarse laugh: "John is in the pound to be shorn; they have impounded the shepherd: Jove! they will soon put the 'Lamb' into his bosom!"

Miriam blushed for shame at such rudeness; but she was too anxious to see this wonderful man, not to cast a curious look at the target of the soldier's scurrility. But as she glanced at him, and met his gaze, she winced under the majesty of his sad but immovable countenance. His eyes seemed at once to radiate pity, anger, and tenderness, and a veil seemed to be drawn over a mystery laid away in his features. His gaze was searching and severe, yet overwhelmingly sympathetic, and, to her utter confusion, was directed at her, as if he accused her of complicity in the insult from the lips of her drunken companion. She did not join in the laughter that greeted the impudent jibe, but keenly felt the impropriety of her presence among the heathen revelers.

Since that meeting Miriam had ever been standing in dread and awe of him. She felt that the contrast between him and herself was so complete as to allow no compromise, with all the difficulties on her own side. Often she had become irritated at the inconsistency of her scruples for a fair hearing. No; she would not listen. What was there in him to impress her so irresistibly with the sense of his superiority over her, and of the obligation of yielding to him? Did not a thousand others in the same walks of life as her own pass him by unnoticed? She conceived a hot hatred of him; yet there remained that indefinable dread, which would not be dispelled, that consciousness of guilt in his sight, which would ever war against her aversion and ever reiterate the accusation that the cause of her unrest lay in her own heart. She cast herself headlong into the current of the popular amusements of the pagan neighbors; she

dressed without reck of modesty; she made her house the scene of unheard-of excesses; she rioted and reveled, cursed and courted, blessed and blasphemed, as her changing moods would dictate; but her triumphs were turned into humiliations, her rioting into remorse, her rejoicing into heartache, by the memory of that look of unspeakable pity in the sad face of the Man of Nazareth, whose image haunted her at every turn. If he had only looked at the soldier, and not at her; "I had not insulted him," she protested; and yet he had made her, and not the rude soldier, the object of his obtrusive commiseration. And the charm of his sad, loving eyes, she owned to herself, had checked her steps in those evil days more than once, when she was about to plunge into that abyss of degradation whence there was no redemption for a woman in Israel.

With these reminiscences Miriam had reclined on a couch, with her hands joined under her head, and beckoned Thamar with a friendly nod to be seated at her side on a low divan. She was determined to give audience to-day to all her misgivings about the Nazarene without restraint. "How narrowly," she said to herself, thinking of the incident of a week before on the Dalmanuthan road, "how narrowly have I escaped him; but still he bids me come after him!"

"Tell me all that he said and did, Thamar," she asked courageously.

Thamar began after the manner of an embarrassed child, tugging now at her wide, short sleeves, now at her sash and the folds of her linen robe, and again brushing over her eyes with the back of the hand; she was manifestly uncomfortable. At last she caused her curious mistress to gasp in admiration of her earnestness with the ingenuous request:

"But thou wilt believe all that I shall say?"

And Miriam assured her pleasantly: "I will believe everything, my little chick; upon my troth!"

Then the child began:

"When we arrived at the house of the wedding, the bride led us, the women of our party, into her private room, and joyfully showed us the purse, which thou hast sent her, out of which she counted fifty pieces of gold: a present from thee, she said gratefully, my mistress dear."

Miriam interrupted her: "Fifty, didst say? I sent a hundred; I counted them into the pouch myself in the presence of Judas, and I sent the pouch sealed with Judas."

"She showed us fifty," Thamar continued with the shadow of an unpleasant reminiscence falling over her eyes; "and she proudly boasted that no bride of Cana had ever received so rich a dowry. At the feast I sat at the side of the Master's mother — "

"Why dost *thou* call him Master?"

"Because his disciples call him such; and I asked leave of him to be one of his followers. He also invited Judas to lay down the stewardship of thy house, and returning, to follow him. But I asked him to accept me in the place of Judas, who was not a good man, I said. But he replied that I should come after him with thee, dear mistress mine, when thou wouldest arise to follow him. He is expecting thee, as surely as we expect the rising sun, although I told him that thou wouldest perhaps never follow him, because thou art young, I said, and beautiful, and wealthy, and well-beloved of the governor" — Miriam's eyes glistened with disdain — "and of all the great ones in the country round."

"Why didst thou say these things of me?" Miriam interposed with an audible tremor in her voice; "and didst thou not also tell him of the feasts which I made in my house to the great ones? Didst thou not, Thamar?" she pressed the child.

"I did tell him of this; but I did also excuse thee, that thou art good and brave, and didst drink only sweet wine,

and that one day at the feast thou didst strike an official in the face: I would also tell him why thou didst punish thy guest; but he laid his hand upon my lips, and bade me be still."

Miriam had closed her eyes, and Thamar saw big tears well up from under the heavy lashes.

"Have I hurt thee again, good mistress mine?" she exclaimed anxiously, and knelt down to bury her face in Miriam's bosom.

"Thou hast not hurt me, Thamar; but is he so kind and pure? Go on, child; I will hear thee to the end."

Thamar remained on her knees; but Miriam, noticing her humble position, lovingly put her arm about her "chick's" shoulders, and drew her up on the couch beside her. This sign of affection revived the maiden's confidence.

"Judas told thee," she resumed, "as I heard from his own lips in the secret bower of the garden, that he doubted the sign, which the Master wrought; but Judas had absented himself that whole day, the third day of the feast, with the excuse that he must visit a cousin of his beyond the walls of the village. But I overheard John, the youngest of his disciples, say to the Master the next day, that Judas had been seen at a beautiful villa about two leagues up in the hills, which is to be sold. The banker, with whom Judas had inspected the orchards and the house, had complimented John on the good taste of his master in selecting such a prudent man to buy up the widows' portions. Judas must have made misrepresentations, John said. However, when he returned in the evening, the sign had been wrought, and the village resounded with the praises of the kindness and power of the new Prophet. But though Judas drank freely of the good wine, much of which was still on hand, yet he did not believe. The steward of the feast related the wonderful deed, but Judas shook his head, and said sneeringly: 'It is easy enough to procure good wine at Cana, and likely enough for a happy groom to advertise a prophet.'"

"And how did Judas receive the invitation to become the Prophet's disciple?"

"At first he looked at the Master in blank amazement; his eyes bulged out of their sockets, his forehead reddened, and his neck swelled up: his appearance betrayed such wrathful surprise that I could not help thinking of an unwilling ox being drawn by the halter into the slaughterer's pen. But after a little while these signs of his unwillingness disappeared, and he arose and demurely approached the Master and kissed the hem of his garment. Then the Master bade him return me to thy house, put his possessions in order, and come after him."

"But if he be a prophet," exclaimed Miriam, "how may he make a thief his disciple! For Judas retained fifty of the gold pieces, which I sent to Anna for a dowry. What is there of the miracle of the good wine? How was it wrought? Tell me in detail, Thamar, that I may set my mind at ease about thy Master!"

Thamar, whom Miriam had now released from her embrace, stood up, and related with animation what she had seen:

"The third day of the feast, the wine casks were running dry, and joy and merriment were departing fast. There were many guests at the feast, as the bride is of thy family, and the gifts were few. Besides, Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples had not offered any gifts, whereas the people of this country expect their invited guests to contribute substantially toward the means of merry-making. When, therefore, the groom was much embarrassed, the mother of the Master whispered to him: 'They have no wine.' What he answered, I could not hear; but I saw her beckon to a waiter to come to her, to whom she said: 'Whatsoever he may say unto you, do it.'

"But there were set there six waterpots of stone, containing two or three measures¹ apiece. And Jesus said to

¹ 80-120 quarts.

them: ‘Fill the pots with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim. And he said again: ‘Draw out now, and bring unto the steward of the feast!’ And they bore it.

“I saw and heard those things, for I was near him, standing with Andrew and Simon, and his mother, and many other guests. And when the steward tasted the water which had been changed into wine, and announced the sign to us, we rejoiced exceedingly, and made merry, and extolled the Master, and shouted, that Elijah hath again appeared in the midst of the people of God.”

Thamar stood with arms extended, her dark face flushed, her eyes ablaze with enthusiasm. Miriam was convinced of the truthfulness of the narrator; “but she is only a child,” she thought, and voiced her doubts about the reality of the event, when she rejoined:

“He said nothing, he did not touch the water with his hand; it all passed quietly, without ostentation and preparation? If this were so, child, the Man of Nazareth would be God. God alone can change water into wine in an instant, by the power of His word or will alone, as He produces wine from the sap of the vine by the ministry of nature serving under His direction. But if he were God, he would not come unknown; he would manifest his presence with glory and majesty, as God showed Himself to the fathers. He would say: I am the Lord, thy God; I will make my enemies my footstool. And he would not make a Judas his disciple.”

“I believe in him,” quietly insisted Thamar; “Lucifer also was once among the angels of light.”

“But Lucifer was first a mirror of the glory of God; shall the Nazarene invert the order of perdition, and change the son of darkness into an angel of light? The companionship of a Judas would prejudice a more profitable cause than that of a reformer in Israel. There have arisen many cunning men out of Galilee these latter years, drawing the people after them into perdition; would to God, this Naza-

rene had more wisdom and prudence! — Go, child, put out the candles, and prepare thyself for bed. This night thou shalt sleep on my couch with me."

Thamar, still full of enthusiasm, which the recounting of the precious memories, gathered in the presence of her own good Master, had rekindled in her soul, sprang toward the candelabrum, and, either oblivious of the rug coverings of the floor, or blinded by the sudden glare of the lights toward which she turned her face, tripped, and fell headlong against the onyx pillar on which the light rested, throwing it down, and pitching the candles into the hangings of the door, which instantly caught fire. The flames licked up the gauzy material, and were already leaping upwards on the costly tapestries hanging from the walls on either side of the door, before the frightened child realized what had happened. Miriam sprang from her couch, and, with a short cry of fear, pulled her robe from her shoulders, and threw it against the defiant flames. But this feint of an attack only roused the anger of the fiery serpents; they consumed the flimsy silk before it could fall to the floor, and strewed its ashes in the shape of fluttering shreds, like cobwebs, about the room. Thamar arose, and shouted for help. But Miriam tore away the burning hangings, and piled them one upon another, thus smothering the flames. The room was filled with dense smoke, and the stinging odor of the smoldering cloths.

Miriam fell unconscious upon the smoking heap; the stifling fumes and the violence of suppressing her alarm and fear had overwhelmed her. The oil lamps also had failed, leaving the room in utter darkness.

Thamar had been blindly groping for the key in the door, but had in her bewilderment found the door only after her mistress had fallen. Now she opened it with a shout of relief; but at the same moment a man hurled his whole weight against it from outside, throwing it into the face of

the child, and himself flying into the middle of the room, where he lay sprawling for an instant. But he sprang to his feet, and gasping for breath in the choked, dark prison, called Miriam's name. He stumbled about until he stubbed his feet against the heap of cloths on the floor, and involuntarily reaching for something to support himself, felt Miriam's limp body in his grasp. He uttered a shout of relief, and carried her out.

The porch of this room opened on a sort of hanging garden; a space as wide as the front of the house, elevated over granite pillars and arches, and enclosed by a low granite wall from which rose stately columns at regular intervals to the latticed, vine-grown roof. The two sides were closed with lattice work, which supported the clambering vines, and on either side an opening was cut through the living wall for an exit on a stone stairway. Beneath this garden were located the spacious wine-vaults; the principal entrance into the house was at the southern gate: Miriam's "sanctuary" overlooked the beautiful lake of Gennesar.

In the midst of this little paradise arose a fountain sending up its hissing streams out of the mouths of three marble satyrs into the roof in such a manner that the three streams united at the top, and fell down together in a shower of glittering pearls into a shallow marble basin. Around this fountain, also overgrown with blossoming vines, and surrounded by shrubbery and oleanders in perennial bloom, seats were arranged, which were carved out of the eight large blocks of stone, set about the fountain like so many silent sentinels.

The evening was not so far advanced as to throw the somberness of night over these beautiful surroundings, and the moonlight weaved its silver threads into the shadows of this bower. Usually a guard was stationed at the porch of the room, and the maid was about the place when the

mistress was within. But to-night, owing perhaps to the curiosity of the servants, who were eager to learn the things that were done at Cana, and those that were invented on the way home, or perhaps to the cunning of Judas, the governor, who would seek to lay an ear to a keyhole, in order to overhear the report of Thamar, the garden and its vicinity were deserted, except for the presence of the man who had carried the unconscious mistress from the ruined room.

The man who removed Miriam from the scene of the fire was a giant in stature. His powerful figure, sharply outlined in the glimmer of the moonlight, bore no sign of tenderness or delicacy. It was Rapha, one of the servants. He had wearied of the unlikely tales which the guests of the wedding feast were telling on their return, and had strolled into the gardens taking upon himself the duty of the steward, of examining the surroundings of the mansion before retiring; for Judas had not returned from his interview with the mistress.

Yet a sigh of pity escaped the giant's breast as he tenderly placed his unfortunate mistress on one of the stone benches, and spread his coat over her. Then he hastened away towards the nether court, where the servants were still gathered in their common hall around the resourceful narrators of the interesting adventures, which may and may not befall a traveler on a day's journey through the mountains of Galilee.

Rapha, who was ignorant of the presence of Thamar in the stifling atmosphere of the damaged room, had scarcely left, when Judas appeared at the opposite gate, and entered stealthily, and with the soft tread and eager attention of a fox cornering his prey. At seeing the door of Miriam's sanctuary open, and the smoke rolling out in grimy clouds soiling and darkening the glittering foliage, he quickened his pace at once and sprang forward, through the door, and stumbled over the prostrate child.

He knelt down to raise her up, and bore her out. Immediately she began to squirm in his arms, and to recover. He saw the wound on her forehead, but it gave him little concern, nor did he trouble himself about her exhaustion when she fell to the pavement as he set her down. But when she cried out with her first breath: "Miriam! Good mistress mine! — Save her! Save her! She is burned to death!" he stood disconcerted for a moment, and then again plunged into the mysterious chamber.

After a little while he emerged with the purse of Miriam in his hands. Drawing a long breath he concealed his treasure in his cincture. Then he leisurely reentered the room, and unbolted a window and an inner door.

Thamar was sufficiently recovered to realize confusedly the extent of the misfortune which she had occasioned. She surveyed her surroundings with eyes full of terror and despair, and raised herself on hands and knees, and dragged herself to the fountain, where she had descried the light coat of Rapha spread on the bench. The discovery of Miriam's pallid face under the garment, as she raised one end of it, revived her completely, and lent her courage above her own pitiable and dangerous condition. She shook off the stupor that she felt falling over herself momentarily, numbing her head and limbs, and cast herself on Miriam's breast, weeping and wailing: "Wake up, dear mistress mine! Do not leave me here alone!" And then she would raise Miriam's eyelids, and feel her cheeks, and open her lips, as if she could with her importunity force a word of solace from them, ever and anon repeating her piteous cry. For if Judas knew that she revealed his misconduct at Cana she could ill afford to lose her mistress in this distress. Miriam was the only friend of the poor little foreigner in a land where not the people alone, but also their manner and their faith were strange to her; and the new ties woven about their friendship to-night had

promised such rich consolation for their future dwelling together!

Amid her lamenting she heard the servants approaching in haste and hurry, and looked up with a sigh of hope. As soon as Hannah recognized the quiet, wan face of her mistress, she flew to her, and pulled and pushed Thamar aside. "Away, away from her!" she cried, and added after a second look, raising her voice to a shriek: "She is dead! God of our fathers, she is dead!" And with this explosion of her terror, her services at that occasion were at an end. She was too much overcome to summon up strength, or even presence of mind enough, to move a hand.

Ruth, another maid, deposited an amphora of fresh wine, and pouring of it on a towel, washed the face and breast of Miriam. Then she poured out a cupful into a silver bowl, and held it to Miriam's lips. But Miriam did not respond either to the energetic treatment, or to the silent invitation to drink.

She opened her eyes indeed, but their vacant stare disclosed the darkness within. A thrill of terror ran through the twitching flesh. But at the same time the ghastly hues of death overcast her features. Thamar, who had stood a few paces apart, and had watched over her mistress with the hungry eyes of utter wretchedness, noticed the sudden change instantly. "She is choking!" she cried, and pressed forward through the throng of the helpless maids to the side of Miriam.

Thamar had on her lonely journeys lived for some time among the Arab tribes of the Hauran and Gadara, and had there witnessed the dangers that may beset the life and health of man. She recognized in that sudden darkening of the face a signal of the gravest danger. Hence, without the loss of a moment, she forced open the mouth of her patient, and with the end of her robe drew out the tongue, which had fallen back in the throat. Then she asked the

aid of Ruth, who had wonderingly interrupted her own ministrations, and raised Miriam to a sitting posture, proping her up against the back of the seat with Rapha's hastily bundled coat.

Now life was returning with every pulse. Miriam's lips parted; but the bewilderment of the almost instantaneous reawakening did not suffer her to realize her position at once: "My maids!" she sighed, not being conscious of their concern and solicitude.

Thamar's happy face was a very portrait of triumph. But, her task absolved, she retired from the scene. The other maids were now pressing about Miriam, voicing a thousand regrets, and asking a thousand questions, to which they expected no answer, save an appreciative glance from their beloved mistress. They were all young girls of grace and comeliness, and prim and pert as the wren on the hedge. The flutter of excitement over the accident had made them as loving as children. One put a wrap over her, another gathered up her disordered hair, another wrapped Miriam's feet in her own veil, others fondled and stroked her slightly scorched hands, and pressed them in their own to warm them with the warmth of their own blood; but all put their faces so close to her as to create a suspicion that they pressed their lips to her hands and hair and neck and feet.

After the flurry had passed, Ruth again presented the cup to Miriam. This time she sipped a few drops with evident relish. The look of gratitude, which she turned upon the anxious girl, bespoke her intense appreciation of the kindly service.

The maids did not allow Rapha, and the men who had come with him, to touch their mistress. They themselves placed her upon an improvised bed or bier, and walked by its sides, chattering comfort and compassion, as the men bore her away.

Judas had watched these proceedings from the room. With the purse in his "keeping," he hesitated to appear last among the anxious servants, when he should have been the first to relieve the distress of his mistress. But his indecision, how to dispose of the purse so as to make its "recovery from the flames" yield him the greater profit, had held him back. It was safer by far not to have his presence known, than to be obliged to invent excuses, if he should decide to retain the treasure. His absence could be more easily explained than the disappearance of the purse. Thamar indeed had seen him, and probably recognized him despite her confusion. But the reckoning with her would be made brief and decisive. Hence he ventured forth to look for the child as soon as the garden was cleared.

He found her cowering in the shadow of a tree, quietly weeping, supporting her bruised head on one hand, while with the other she tried to stanch the blood which was still running over her face in thin streamlets.

He sat down at her side. "Thamar," he began with brutal disregard of her suffering, "Thamar, I have a close reckoning with thee. Thou hast betrayed me to the mistress." Thamar trembled, and turned her glassy, half-closed eyes beseechingly upon his severe face. That mute appeal for mercy stopped the brutality of his tone, but not the directness of his accusations. "Thou hast told her of the villa which I bought with that sum," he continued; "I should cast thee out, or kill thee, to silence thy tongue forever!"

"Judas, have mercy!" she prayed faintly.

"Hear what I will thee to do," he resumed coldly; "if the mistress act upon thy information, tell her, as I will tell, that I presented that money to the Prophet,—to buy the wine which ye simpletons drank in admiration of his power. Persuade her that the money was well spent for

his glory. And the purse —” he hesitated: “hast seen the purse upon the mistress?” He would inquire first whether she had seen it in his hands.

Thamar roused herself at so much display of hypocrisy, and replied angrily: “The purse is hid beneath thy cincture! See that thou do not keep it, lest it become a curse to thee!” She knew that it contained the priceless jewel which Miriam was wont to wear in her diadem on festive occasions.

Judas raised his finger threateningly, and said with great severity: “If Miriam take me to task for the loss of the purse I will cast thee into the sea. Take heed, then, maid, and remember nothing of my cincture!”—He had decided!

“Judas,” she cried, “thou art a thief!”

“And I shall become a murderer, if thou blabst!”

“I shall tell the Prophet of thy misdeed! Give me the purse, or take it to the mistress!”

“Thamar,” Judas retorted, quivering with rage, “Thamar, hear my last warning; if *one* word escape thy lips about what thou hast seen of me this night, I will wrench thy head from thy neck, and cast thee to the dogs: fit company for a foreign hireling such as thou be. I should finish thee now, and have done with thee,” he added after a moment’s thought, and moved towards her. But Thamar, unmindful of her suffering, and filled with the horror and hatred of his inhuman cruelty, sprang to her feet, cursed him, and fled into the night.

Judas made no attempt to prevent her escape. She might leave the mansion again, nevermore to return, or she might creep into some sheltered corner and die. Her injuries in body and soul were so deep that she would not be able to injure his interests again at least for a week, at all events, if he was a judge of human infirmity. “By that time,” he said to himself, “my possessions shall be safely stored in the new villa of Cana.”

He returned to Miriam's room, in order to make some combination of circumstances that would lend plausibility to the suspicion of a marauder's visit after the fire. He left the inner door and the window open, but locked the outer door, and put the key in his pocket. Why, a bandit would certainly force his way into the neighboring apartments, and not lose time to close doors and windows after himself! Judas, of course, would maintain, that he had locked the outer door at a later inspection. But he was not aware that the open window was protected with heavy bars, which were concealed by the damask curtains.

Then he retired to the governor's house to examine the contents of the stolen purse.

Among the trinkets, coins, and curious keepsakes, with which Miriam's purse was filled, Judas found a large sapphire, set in a golden ring, with clasps and clips to fasten in the famous diadem of the proud princess. He had often admired it from a distance, and had often experienced a longing to handle the precious jewel, and had gloated over the possibilities of profit from its sale to a dealer of Damascus or of Alexandria, where the costly circlets of the Egyptian and the Syrian princesses were made, and where the value of so rare a stone would be properly appreciated by the skilful artists.

He had heard the servants tell with awe that Eleazar had acquired it for the dainty little maid Miriam, then still a beautiful and pious child under the same roof with her quiet sister Martha and her severe brother, at a fabulous price—augmented, no doubt, by the unwise reverence of the poor servants—from a black merchant, or prince, or pilgrim; at all accounts, from a man of the hot South, who had visited Bethlehem with Melchior, the Ethiopian sage, in the days of Quirinius, the legate of the famous first *Census*, and had later returned to enquire anew after the Savior of the Jews, the *new-born King* of the Magi from the East.

The stone was well worth a villa or two of the kind to be found between and on the slopes of the Galilean hills. But it was not marketable, as Judas saw at his first examination: on its face was cut the initial "S" of the name of Miriam's father, Simonides. The letter was cut in high relief, so that it could not be removed without materially injuring the value of the stone.

Hence Judas contemptuously tossed it on a table, and counted the money. Then he put both money and stone in another purse, which he had taken out from his cincture, and after concealing his treasure in his bosom, flung himself on his couch to rest. But he was too nervous to sleep. After a little while he arose again, muttering about "discovery" and "treason," looked out of the window over the quiet waters of the lake, paced the floor disputing with himself, and at last returned to the dark corner of the room, again to tempt elusive sleep — in vain. There was a hard battle to fight between his conscience and his vicious greed, which had this night nearly betrayed him into murder!

Finally, however, he concluded that he would keep what he had gained out of the general confusion. "Let them be careful of their trash if they do not want to let a little of it fall by the wayside for the luck of a thrifty man," he persuaded himself, and closed his eyes with the satisfaction of having overcome the objections of a much too religious conscience!



CHAPTER III

FORBIDDEN PATHS

THE next morning Judas made ready at an early hour to present himself before his mistress. "She certainly knows nothing of my evil conduct of last evening," he said to himself, as he sauntered across the court towards the mansion. The probable suffering and sickness of Miriam after the terrible experience did not concern him sufficiently to cause in his cold and empty soul so much as a passing sentiment of sympathy. He had been defeated; it was he himself that deserved sympathy. He was peevish and irritable; for he had lost a night of sleep over his misfortune.

But yet, good fortune had not deserted him altogether. If it had left him at the one door, it had come back at the other with such speed as to strike its wings in his face: he had probably lost Miriam, but he had found Miriam's money. She would at all events be only a burden to him, if he ever intended making good his resolution of following the call of the mysterious new Prophet.

Still he would not resign his entire claim upon the favor of his mistress. Patience, joined with tact and circumspection, may avail more than the bald presumption of which he had yesterday made himself guilty; he must change his tactics.

True, he must await the results of the certain inquiry after the lost purse, which had contained, by his own counting, thirty gold shekels,¹ besides smaller pagan coins of silver and gold, and Miriam's precious sapphire. But he

¹ One gold shekel was worth about ten dollars.

could face any accusation in that direction with a serene countenance; he had burned the purse, and scattered the ashes, together with the small silver disks and gold beads with which it was ornamented, in a newly ploughed field, and had ordered Omer to plough it over, and harrow it. The money and the gem he had securely bestowed in his belt; and he would defy even Rapha, the giant, his fellow-servant and former boon-companion, to make an attempt at loosening his belt for inspection, if its presence beneath the ample sash should at all be suspected. His treasure was safe. Whatever might become necessary for him to undertake for its protection and defense would appear in due season.

If only Thamar held her peace. The thought that an indiscreet child was privy to his dangerous secret kept his triumph in abeyance. In broad daylight his crime wore no mask. If she should betray him, Miriam would undoubtedly believe her. "Why did I not strangle her in the confusion of the night," he pressed out between his teeth, "and throw her body into the lake! But I would still have to answer for the appropriation of half of Anna's dowry; I do not feel bold enough to present the lie, about Jesus of Nazareth's holding it, personally to the suspecting and imperiously cool mistress. Well, if there is no honorable retreat possible, I will flee back to the mountains, and rejoin the patriots."

The "patriots" were scattered bands of outlaws, prowlers and highwaymen, who lived by the sword, whenever some restless rebel employed them for the inculcation of his own views of patriotism; and by theft and robbery, when no disturbance furnished a better pretext for the plying of their craft. The mountains of Galilee swarmed with them in those days of political unrest and national resentment of the rule of Rome.

Originally these swarms were formed in imitation of the

bands of the Maccabean heroes, and their existence was justified, in the eyes of their compatriots, by the sanctity of their purpose. They were the ever-ready champions of the oppressed, the national guard over the hallowed boundaries of the Land of Promise. But they had long degenerated into a plague for friend and foe alike. Their code of ethics was that of the original Zealots, who were bound by a most solemn oath to remove from the people of God everyone, sparing not even their own fathers and brothers, who was suspected of favoring the established order under the government of Rome; but these "patriots," although making common cause with the Zealots in the exploitation of public disorders, still went their own way in applying the common regulations to a private chase, whenever this furnished profitable quarry.

One of these bands Judas had joined when he had come up from Southern Judea, but had had to sever his connection with it when he assumed the stewardship over Miriam's estate at Magedan.

Miriam herself, albe a woman, and as such scarcely considered worthy of public notice, was under the ban of the marauders, because she was a wealthy woman in her own right; but her enforced contributions toward the treasury of the outlaws were worth respecting, even if her womanhood was not. Besides this obvious reason for the respect of the "fighters of God," there was another which lent color to the title of the public collectors: she had wantonly estranged herself from the national worship and custom, and was holding communion with the accursed foreign tyrants. But she had never been molested in person; "the hen that laid the golden eggs" had, on the contrary, at times even enjoyed the protection of one band or another against private evildoers.

Such had been the associations of Judas, before he took service with the renowned "Princess of Gan-Sar."

But Judas was not satisfied with the desperate decision he had reached. Life amid the refined surroundings of the celebrated mansion of Magedan had become so pleasant to him, and its comforts and honors so sweet, that the thought of returning either to the poor village of his birth, Kerioth, on the borders of Idumea, or to the wilds and hardships of the Galilean mountains, was as bitter as wormwood; of following the poor Man of Nazareth, he could scarcely think without feeling sorry for the Prophet, who had made such a poor selection: Judas would first provide against future want, if, haply, the Prophet's projects failed, whatever they might be; "to be honest," he soliloquized, "I think he is a visionary; but visionaries have often led their followers to power and wealth over their own graves." He would consider this appendage to his plans later, when he should have more leisure.

Now he must seek for Thamar. It would be imprudent to face the mistress, if the child had blabbed about the purse. Hence, instead of ascending the stairs to the palace portals, he turned about at their foot, and proceeded to the hall of the maids. But there nobody had seen the injured "chick" since last night. Judas's heart beat faster for the hope that she would be found dead somewhere about the orchards in the rear of the house. Thither he directed his steps; and in the garden he found her, in a most pitiable plight. There she sat in the cool shade of a bower of vines, leaning against the wall, a kerchief, soaked with her own blood, tied about her head, with her hair wet with the sweat of agonizing pains, her lips parted and parched, and her tiny hands, covered with blood, folded in her lap. He saw at a glance that a severe fever was consuming her strength and vitality. She must have sought this cool nook in the night for relief. In the uproar over the narrow escape of the beloved mistress, the quiet little stranger, whose presence had scarcely been noticed since her arrival among them, had been overlooked and forgotten.

Judas felt a twitch of sympathy at the heart, but instantly reared up against "sentimentality": the natural death which seemed imminent would relieve him of the possible necessity of putting her out of the way by violence. Thus seeing his prospects thrive, he returned to the palace, to present himself before Miriam.

In accordance with his resolve to change his tactics, his attitude in her presence was no longer that of an obedient servant. He stood erect — but Miriam had never asked servility of her servants — sober, dignified, and spoke his *Sholom* with the gravity of a master. He expressed his regrets at her misfortune with the dulcet accents of tender solicitude, but with the manly reserve of a favored suitor. Judas was pleased at his own versatility; but Judas had been educated in Jerusalem, at the feet of the Scribes and Pharisees, the accomplished masters of hypocrisy and cunning. Miriam did not betray much suffering in consequence of last night's mishap; but she seemed not in a mood to be impressed, and much less to be imposed upon. There was, indeed, a slight show of attention in her glistening eyes; but whether it was curiosity or admiration, the conceited suitor for her favor could not divine. But she did not leave him long in doubt: as soon as he had ended his demonstration of knavish audacity, she motioned him toward the door without deigning to reply even with the conventional "*Sholom*," Peace to thee!

Judas quaked and quivered with fury at this affront. He knew that now his game was lost; Thamar must have betrayed him; he would return, and strangle her with his own hands, ere he would prepare to extricate his feet from this trap. As he went out, the maids, who had been dressing Miriam's hair during the one-sided interview, laughed after him.

He plunged headlong into the bower, but the "chick," whose peeping, he swore, had undone him, was not there.

He searched through the adjoining groves most assiduously; but she was not to be found. He met Omer, the gardener, and inquired after her.

"Gaddiel has taken her away," he answered laconically, and went about his work.

He returned to the court, on which faced the entrance of the mansion. Since he had heard the name of the young debauchee, hatred was added to his rage.

In the court he found two horses tied to rings in the wall, saddled and bridled, as he had often seen them there, awaiting the mistress and one of the servants for the customary tour of inspection through the fields and vineyards. But these mounts were so gorgeously caparisoned that he dismissed at once the idea of ordinary proceedings. Besides, these animals were strangers. He knew every horse in the stables of Magedan; these were too fine to belong to anyone but the son of Simon of Capernaum, the Pharisee. Gaddiel had very expensive propensities which an indulgent sire easily pardoned in his sprightly son and heir.

Judas examined them minutely. The slender legs, the small and gracefully turned heads, the sparkling eyes, the velvety mouths, the fine coats of dark, luminous brown, the silky manes and tails, all indicated an excellency of breed and keep beyond the means and taste of anyone in that region, except Miriam, or Gaddiel Ben Simon; but Miriam was not in the habit of squandering money on horse-flesh.

As Judas felt and affectionately patted the various parts which he admired, his face lit up with a broad grin of appreciation. He untied the one saddled for Miriam's companion, and springing into the saddle, gave an encouraging click with his tongue and scampered away at a merry gait. "Of the land of Assur,"¹ he exclaimed with delight; "just such

¹ In olden times the Assyrian horses were as famous as the "dromedaries of Midian and Ephra."

an excellent steed would be fit mount for the leader of the patriots; I should escape with it!"

He had forgotten murder and love alike over his admiration of the noble beast and his ambition after the first place among the prowlers of the mountains. But as the animal warmed up under the experienced rider, and reached out to its heart's content, Judas was brought back to the desperation of his situation: "I may not," he growled loud enough to be heard above the muffled steps of his gallant mount; "I may not; she will hound me to the depths of the mountain wilderness!"

But now his thoughts took a turn in a new direction. His face betrayed an agreeable surprise at some discovery that he should have made ere this, but for his preoccupation with the desire of forcing his attentions on his unwilling mistress. He wheeled about shortly toward the gate, and headed his steed toward the road of Damascus, allowing it to fall into an easy trot. He would not flee; he would order his ruffled temper to see clearly what it would be most profitable to do.

Miriam may not yet have discovered the loss of the purse; it was so early, and she was only dressing when he called on her for the morning salutation. Her proud bearing toward him was not so very strange in view of his own effort of impressing her with his solicitude in the presence of her maids; he had been a fool once more. Moreover, she had always maintained an attitude of disdainful reserve toward him: he had often been a fool before. He would remain until they drove him out of his last ditch. If she suspected him of thievery other than that of part of the dowry, she would have had him held; Omer and Rapha were powerful wrestlers, and the other men about the place could have been advised of the impending arrest before they went out into the vineyards. He laughed at his fears and cowardice, and turning about, walked his frisking mount leisurely back to

the court. "If my calculation fails, and they lay hands on me, I will not parley; I will draw my dagger, and cut down everyone who shall dare to touch me, and then I will hie me to Capernaum to seek Jesus of Nazareth: him she will not venture to molest on my account"; and he grinned contemptuously.

But he could not allay his misgivings; the choice between the company of the Man of Nazareth, and the liberty of a man of wealth and refinement, was too bitter to be palatable at this season. "What is there between him and me," he protested, "that I should make this superhuman sacrifice? I am born free, and the bondman of no man; why shall I not do as I would?" And vehemently gritting his teeth, he added: "I shall make him repay me for lost opportunities if his mission fails! — Why can I not dismiss the clamor of his voice: 'Follow me!'"

He had dismounted, and the nervous fumbling of his fingers at the halter bore witness to his agitation over a duty which he knew, but would shirk if he had the courage. The memory of the majestic command "Follow me!" cowed him like a whip in the hand of an uncompromising master.

It was an act of supreme arrogance for the steward to bestride the mount of a guest at the house, and frisk about the highways in the manner of a prince; but the role of a servant had ever ill befitted Judas and he had never acted it except before the eyes of the imperious Miriam: but even toward her he had, after the first sign of her condescension, which he straightly interpreted as familiarity, put forward his most natural trait, brutal selfishness.

He was not abashed when now a young man quickly stepped to his side, and angrily snatching the halter from his awkward hands rebuked him for his arrogance in meddling with the beasts. He sprang aside, and snapped aggressively: "Gaddiel, son of Simon! Thou art too neat to chide

Judas of Kerioth:¹ he might disturb thy primped-up locks. What wouldest thou at Magedan this early hour? Thou art about evil ways!"

The face of the ill-used youth, strong and proud, flushed with sudden anger; he doubled up the halter in his hands, and struck his assailant a smart blow across the back. Judas clutched at Gaddiel's throat; but he stepped behind the head of his horse, and again raised the supple scourge, when the hand of Judas tightened on the golden chain about his neck, snapped it, and tore it away. It was a windfall for the greedy steward. He looked at it with covetous eyes, and stowed it away in his bosom. Then ducking under the horse's breast in order to avoid the threatening blow, he grasped both the upper arms of Gaddiel with the grip of a maniac, and shaking him furiously, hissed into his face: "Thou shalt pay the principal some other day; thy chain I shall accept as interest on the blow. Go thy way; I will not disturb the peace of my mistress with the whining of a pup such as thou." Then he threw the youth against the wall, and strode out at the outer gates.

Gaddiel was bewildered. His neck would have been broken if the savage clutch of his burly opponent had closed on it; it was a grace worth pricing, that he lived. As it was, he was much impressed with his own littleness in the presence of so much brawn and brutishness.

He had never met Judas before, and did not know that he was the governor of Magedan; he might be one of the servants, who, in view of the public disfavor against their mistress, were not all select, and might not be above reproach themselves, or, he might be one of the ubiquitous prowlers: at all events, he would keep the unpleasant incident from Miriam. He straightened out the inartistic ruffs and wrinkles of his robes, and proceeded to tie the nervous animal.

¹ Kerioth, Josh. 15, 25.

Gaddiel had been paying court to the Princess of Gennesar since he first had met her, a year before, on the lake, in a pageant celebrated in honor of the Galilean Tetrarch, Herod Antipas. There it happened that his barge touched hers alongside, giving the unwary youth ample opportunity to feast his inexpert eyes on her dazzling beauty, and to be ravished out of sense by her sparkling wit and grace of speech and manner. But on that occasion she was waited upon by so many men of distinction, that he, the boy, the son of the Pharisee, participating in the festivities unknown to his orthodox father, and, hence, cautious not to thrust himself into the society of next-door neighbors, was overlooked in that galaxy of wealth and worldliness. Still, the proud princess, the object of all attention, had not overlooked him, and in a spell of her incalculable fancies had sprung into his barge, and bidden him steer away from "those roaring bulls." She even entered his gaudy tent, and reclined with him to drink wine.

Such manifest preferment would have dispelled the infatuation of a man; but it turned the head of the silly boy: it was his first lesson in the study of women, who would lead their dupes by the nose to the very gate of paradise, to leave them standing without, disappointed, but not discouraged. When the unwary boy, in a moment of foolish confidence, began to fondle her, she resented the insolence, and laughingly slapped his face. But she left him thereupon, and gave orders to sail for her own barge.

Afterwards they held as many confidential meetings as Miriam would permit, in order to keep the appetite of her new admirer keen, and the jealousy of her older wooers fresh and smart. To Gaddiel the mistress of Magedan had remained the seductive apparition that she had seemed to him, and many others, at the feast of Herod, a dazzling revelation of light that lured and blinded. She had so often foiled his amorous advances, and again encouraged his

protestations of love, when he had become timid at the frequent rebuffs, that he thought of nothing else but how he might succeed in vanquishing her squeamishness. With this intention he had procured the noble beasts from Berothai and had had them stabled with a friend near Magedan, in order to attract Miriam's attention, and excite in her the desire of owning one. But the events of the last two weeks, over which was cast the somber shadow of the Prophet of Nazareth, had kept Miriam away from her customary haunts; and hence the rumor that she had been burned in her apartments, which he believed to be more gossip than truth, furnished him a most welcome opportunity of visiting her openly, to express neighborly sympathy. Hitherto he had carried on his suit in secret; the son of a strict Pharisee could not brave the danger of public disgrace, which would attach to his association with the courtiers of Herod, the "sinners," and the Roman officials and officers. Indeed, if his father would discover his illicit amours with the princess, who, because of her trysting with the pagans, shared the common ill repute and term of condemnation, he would cast him out of his house. He found little fault with the laxity of his son's morals, but he must hold him to the observances of the sect, which knew no greater sin than a compromise between Israel and the Gentiles. Let him court the comely damsels of Galilee; let him drink wine with his companions through the length of a nightly feast or revel: but woe to him if he should betray the national traditions, or be found in the company of the despised traitoress, Miriam of Magedan! But there was no danger of discovery; old Simon had implicit faith in the integrity of his son's patriotism.

Gaddiel, emboldened by the blind indulgency of his sire, had this morning resolved as soon as he knew that the curious and loquacious women of Magdalum would understand the reason of his visit, to pay his compliments to the

enchantress in her own den. The market women, who did not recognize his identity, had detailed to him all the circumstances of Miriam's misfortunes, adding in conclusion: "The hen is safe, but the 'chick' is hurt unto death." He did not know who the "chick" might be; but as there was no matronly governess at the mansion, under whose wings the mistress were enjoying protection, he felt safe to assume, that Miriam was not the "chick."

This was his auspicious day. He would press his suit to-day to an issue, which he had demonstrated to himself could not but be favorable. He would have his Syrians, Chabul and Chuza, bridled and trapped, and bring them to her that she might select either for a present. It would surely please her to know that he who loved her best thought nothing of parting with such a rare and precious possession for her sake. And if she were not too ill, he would suggest a jaunt into the wooded hills. "What a favored mortal, thou!" he chuckled; "thanks to the Lord of hosts, who looketh down kindly upon his servant!"

When he ascended the mount, on whose summit Miriam's mansion was perched, gleaming and beaming in the morning sun, he rapturously even intoned a psalm: "Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is Thy name in the whole earth! Yea, Thy greatness is extolled above the heavens! Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou perfected praise against Thine enemies, that Thou mayest smite the foe and the avenger."

Little did the giddy scion of the proud Pharisee think that the Lord, whose glory he was chanting, must withhold his benediction from this perilous journey. But Gaddiel, for his ignorance of the practice of true piety, could be happy without a God, for whose sanction of his happiness he had never troubled his mind.

When he entered Miriam's gardens, he encountered Omer, the constituted watchman, whom he offered a bribe;

but he could have passed without paying an entrance fee. His splendid robes and the appearance of his fine beasts were a passport to be recognized everywhere in Galilee. Riding down a shaded path towards the rear of the court, he found Thamar in her plight; but not trusting to let the horses stand alone in a strange place, he called a gardener, whom he espied at a distance, and directed his attention to the little sufferer. "What may bring this maid out into the garden, sick unto death?" he inquired of the man.

"Oh, wine!" ejaculated the gardener, with a significant wink at the windows above, before he had seen her. It was Rapha, the Judean, who had also been initiated in the sect of the Zealots, but who, like his companion Judas, had, at least temporarily, forsaken them.

But when he saw the blood-stained napkin over the brow of the child, and the deathly pallor of her cheeks, his manner was changed in an instant. He then barely recognized the face of Thamar; but he lifted her gently from the stone seat, and bore her away on his arms, moaning with impetuous compassion: "The poor, poor little chick, that saved my mistress's life."

In the servants' hall, where he gently bedded her on a couch, he gave all the directions necessary for her comfort with the authority of a physician. "When ye have wrapped her in warm cloths," he said finally to the attending maids, "and she begins to perspire freely, administer hot wine spiced with rue and saffron, until she be well drunk."

The sympathy and solicitude of Rapha became contagious. The maidens vied with each other in their ministrations of comfort and kindness to the little stranger; but Gaddiel stood aside, a disinterested spectator. What was the suffering of a "stranger in Israel" to a Pharisee? He was glad enough to see Judas fumble with the halter of his horse, that he might with propriety leave this scene of suffer-

ing and mercy, among the lowly, in whom, his father had taught him, there was nothing worthy of the attention or sympathy of the select Sons of Abraham — the Pharisees. —

As Judas walked away, and Gaddiel was about to secure the halter of his mount in the ring of the wall, he heard the rustle of silk garments, and a flood of delirious joy rushed through his veins. "It is she," he chirped; and bowing under the neck of the horse, he saw Miriam come down the tiled path at the side of the mansion. She recognized him instantly, and blushed. But it was the flush of anger that mounted her temples. Had he lost his head, to drag their secret before the public? Would he recklessly provoke his father to curse them together? The escapade on the barge had been forgiven and forgotten, as those with whom Miriam habitually associated easily forgave her faults, and forgot her follies. But her youth and beauty, and her generosity of heart and hand, had also endeared her to her immediate neighbors, who often indeed stood aghast at her disregard of form and custom, but had, nevertheless, conquered their disgust at her frivolity of trysting with the foreign officialdom. The Galileans entertained broader views of patriotism than the Judeans, and especially in the region of Gennesar, where health and plenty was the certain reward of the natural industriousness of the population, and where the daily contact with the Gentiles had dulled the national sensitiveness, the people were averse to the rancorous bickering and the habit of fault-finding which formed the daily meat of the Southern Jews. The Pharisees, indeed, were as hostile to the rejoicing of the masses in Galilee, as in Judea. For their judgment of her, Miriam had no regard; but before the people, with whom she lived on her estate, she was very loath to appear as the courtesan of the conceited son of the Pharisee. She had toyed and dallied with him, only to see him grow foolish, and laugh his silliness to scorn; but she had put a bit in his mouth that he could not bite asunder:

marriage with him was impossible on account of the prejudice of the caste, and because Gaddiel was not made of the timber that a high-spirited woman considered material for the making of her compeer; and mistress she would be to none. She would toy and dally — it was the privilege of a much-courted woman — but she would not be toyed and dallied with; this was the right of her princely estate.

Once when Herod, the Tetrarch, in a drunken revel, had assumed undue liberties towards her, which her pride recognized as springing from the sense of his superiority over her, she had pushed the besotted brute away with such fierceness, that he fell from his couch, and upset an amphora with wine, to swim in its fragrant flood. To appease his anger, she laughed at the incident, and whispered into his ears, but with sufficient circumstance and ostentation for her neighbors at the table to understand: "Such precious fools should be preserved in wine." And she left his feast directly, after having offered that savory compliment.

And now this cock-a-hoop fop thrusts himself upon her publicly as her favored lover! For the sake of her two maids, who were following a few paces in the rear, she would pass him unnoticed.

But Gaddiel had been a docile disciple in her own school. He would not flaunt his adulation in her face before witnesses; he came forth, smiling with the fulness of his happiness, but bowing most courteously, and expressing his sympathy with earnest devotion.

"I have heard," he said, "of the terrible danger which thou hast escaped, of being burnt alive, and as a neighbor I felt obliged to call upon thee, and assure myself in person of thy safety. Thanks to the God of Israel, that thou hast been snatched from the jaws of death, to continue to be the pride and ornament of Gennesar!"

Miriam amid admiration of his skill and tact thanked him heartily, and allowed him furtively to kiss the sleeve

of her snowy tunic, which purled from the slashed sleeve of her mantle. She knew that she was safe from manifest indiscretions on his side, and, therefore, dismissed her maids with a graceful nod of the head.

Gaddiel's eyes, brimful of gratitude and satisfaction, betrayed his hearty appreciation of this favor. He could not speak for joy; but with his eyes he devoured her. Had she expected him? he asked himself: the refreshing fragrance of precious nard was in her hair, the intoxicating odor of the attar of roses in her garments and upon her body. — But the young fool should have known that Miriam loved luxury for luxury's sake.

When they arrived at the place where the noble beasts were tied, whither Gaddiel led the way, she laid her delicate white hand upon their manes, fondled their soft mouths, and at last laid her cheek against the cheek of the mare, and cried with delight: "What a pretty creature!" The mare pranced and snorted playfully, and ere Miriam could formulate her desire to try her, Gaddiel had untied the beautiful beast, and stood ready to assist the admiring Miriam into the saddle.¹ And with her habitual impulsive audacity the princess mounted, assisted by her gallant knave, and, deftly fingering the bridle, cavorted about the court until her companion sprang on the back of the other beast, and then stormed away through the gates, for a hot brush up the road of Damascus.

The beasts sped away like swallows; the soft step and even gait made the dash in the bright and breezy morning truly delightful. Gaddiel soon fell behind, not because of courtesy, but because of Miriam's greater dexterity and courage. He was exhibiting the treasures of which she was to make a choice for her own possession, and his own skill, for which he craved her admiration. Miriam let out her mare to its own full pleasure, throwing the reins over its

¹ The *modern* saddle is of later date.

neck. She had learned from the first furlong that the noble beast was absolutely reliable, and she felt as safe as in a cradle. Now and then she would affectionately pat the animal's neck, and the proud steed responded with the exertion of all its power and art. Miriam was far ahead of her unskilled companion, when, at the crossroads at Capernaum, she reined in her energetic mount, and triumphantly awaited her nerveless, perspiring swain.

Gaddiel was vexed and pleased alike. Miriam laughed at him, and gibed him with "treading on leaden heels, while she soared away on the wings of the wind. And if thou permit me," she said, "I shall call this mare Barak,¹ for I have never ridden swifter beast."

"Call her Lightning, love," he replied, "or Wind, or Cradle; she is thine, the pledge of my devotion."

He expected an effusion of grateful, enthusiastic acknowledgment, and placed himself close at her side to receive every drop of it from her tempting lips, when suddenly her brow darkened, and she wheeled about, without a word of thanks. He looked in the direction from which she had taken her sullen gaze, and saw a group of men draw near on the road of Sepphoris.

"We must turn back," she said querulously; "I am not arrayed for exhibition before the eyes of travelers."

But Gaddiel divined that her scruples were not those of shrinking modesty, when he looked more closely, and beheld the new Prophet walking at the head of the group.

Miriam was agitated, and nervously plucked at the reins, so that her beast pricked up its fine, small ears in wonderment, and reared and pranced. When Gaddiel, who was anxious not to be despoiled of this most favorable opportunity of formally declaring his love, asked her why she broke off the pleasant jaunt so abruptly, she silently pointed her chin in the direction of the white figure in the road, and motioned

¹ Lightning.

him with her head to follow her home. But the disappointed youth sneered contemptuously:

“Jesus of Nazareth, the Dreamer? Go thy way, easily; I shall follow, after I have made my obeisance to the new wine-maker.”

Miriam did not hear all that he said; she had already proceeded homeward. But Gaddiel remained on the spot, resolved to pay his compliments to the Man whose imaginary greatness had cast a dire shadow over his smiling prospects.

As the leader came abreast of him, the youth cleared his throat, cocked up his head on one side, and fixed his disdainful look upon him, ready with his sally of peppered wit. But Jesus glanced at him, kindly and sadly, and walked by. Gaddiel was disarmed, conquered, thrown down in a heap upon his exploded conceit; he did not even tarry to take notice of the uncouth followers of the “wine-maker,” but turned and fled in fear of those majestic eyes of the Prophet: his greatness had also cowed the scoffing son of the Pharisee.

When he overtook Miriam, he blustered with an abortive attempt at levity:

“A good man, this Prophet, on the hunt after a Saul to raise on the Throne of David.”

“Mayhap he be the King himself?” Miriam answered curtly.

And thence they rode home together in silence, each occupied with the impression of an indefinable terror at the poor Man of Nazareth.



CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST STORM

WHATEVER unpleasantness Miriam experienced at meeting the Prophet of Nazareth was introduced by her own apprehensions. He had never spoken to her; nor of her, before he told the "chick" to go back and to remain with her. But this advice would have been given by any just man who recognized the obligations of a servant towards his master. Had he not placed the condition, against which her soul rebelled, "Until she come after me," he might have gone out of her life, as little noticed afterward as a light cloud in the empyrean overhead. He had never intruded his person or his teaching upon her attention. He was an extraordinary man, she conceded; the region about the Lake of Gennesar was awhir with the rumors and reports of his godly precepts, his simplicity and delicacy of manner and address, his uncompromising criticism of the hypocrisy and covetousness of the Scribes and Pharisees: but his precepts were not holier than those of Moses and the prophets, his gentleness was not finer than that of other pious rabbis, and his criticism was not more just than her own of the same sect. She was herself so much averse to the ways of the Pharisees, that she had aroused their deepest hatred and contempt by her traitorous desertion into the camp of the Gentiles and the national foe. They did not only refuse to salute her on the way, but they gathered in their robes, turned aside their heads, and spat out before her; hence the rebuke administered to them by the Prophet did not displease her.

Then why did she fear to meet him? "Why have I

wincing at his glance?" she meditated on the way home; "why do I dread his judgment of me? Does he bear me hatred, as the Pharisees, for my want of 'national spirit'? But his glance, at the meeting in Simon's garden at Caper-naum, was not cold pity, but sorrowing sympathy. Does he condemn me as beyond the reach of blessing? But he invites me to join his disciples!"

Thus she irresistibly reverted to the pivotal question of her present existence amid unbearable anxiety: "Must I follow him?"

And now Judas cast his sinister shadow over her dark reverie. Why should such an ingrate, such a boldface, also be selected to the discipleship? Spend her days in the company of Judas? She knew him well since this morning. They had told her of Thamar's spell of unconsciousness, and her later solicitude, which saved her life, and the quick sense of Miriam filled out the pause between her removal from the room and her restoration at the fountain with the sickening scenes of Judas's brutality, as he had betrayed it in the bower of the garden, an hour or two before. She loathed his presence so heartily that she would not even give orders for his apprehension and punishment, in order to be done with him without further contact. Live with him? Nay; "I would rather be buried alive in a dungeon of hell!" she cried aloud. If the Man of Nazareth was a prophet; if he was the Great Prophet: why did he not know the absolute unfitness of Judas for the office of preacher?

Then she argued again with herself: "If Jesus stands awaiting my coming, — he knows me, as everyone knows — does he not insist upon a complete change of my habits and practices? May not Judas be changed? What did Thamar say: 'Lucifer once was an angel of heaven'; if the Lord God foresaw his fall, why did he create him? Or should he create him without liberty? or glorify him without probation? or not create him at all? And if the Prophet

selects Judas, may not Judas profit by the distinction? Is it not greater mercy to call a sinner unto repentance, than a just man, who needs not calling? If the Prophet is the Messiah, then may he call even a Judas unto conversion; but if he be a Reformer of the type of the Zealots and 'patriots,' it matters little whom he may call unto himself, even if he call Miriam, the Sinner!"

She had this morning also discovered the loss of her purse, and attributed it to Judas's thievery. Rapha had searched the ruins of the "sanctuary" at the second cock-crow,¹ and found that the outer entrance, indeed, was locked, but that one of the heavily barred windows, which could be opened only from the inside, was standing wide open. Someone had bungled at hiding the tracks of his visit to the scene. Why should a thief from the outside have left the entrance locked? Or would the governor not also be so careful as to lock the interior door, if he took the trouble to lock the exterior, after having aired the room? Rapha had seen Judas in the night, under the tree, where he so pressed Thamar with his threats. Judas was the last one to leave the scene of the accident.

Miriam cared not for the loss of the money; she only deplored the loss of the sapphire: but she was deeply aggrieved to know that she had been so shamefully mistaken in the selection of her last governor. It was anger at herself as much as loathing for the unjust steward, that choked her voice when she dismissed him that morning with a silent gesture of contempt.

Gaddiel also had been gloomily thoughtful on the way home from the excursion to Capernaum. The taunt which would not leave his lips, when he met the Prophet face to face, haunted him like a bloodthirsty fly,² and pestered him with its untiring efforts to fasten on his mind. "The wine-

¹ About four o'clock (the first about two o'clock) A.M.

² The 'Tzetze,' the pest of the East; Hebrew, *zebu*.

maker!" he would say to himself; "he could heap up the riches of Solomon, if he would practice the prudence of the widow of Sarepta."¹ But knowing that his secret reverence for the Nazarene belied this blasphemous quib, he became more and more uneasy, and asked himself why he had not the courage to call him mockingly "the wine-maker," and remind him of his relationship with Elisha, when he stood face to face with him on the road? The report of his wonderful deed at Cana had spread with the swiftness of the morning glow; but had also been embellished with the unbeseeming additions of the superstitious, and distorted out of semblance with the scornful comment of the incredulous. It was not only the Pharisees, who reposed the acme of piety in religious posing; their example had long corrupted the simple faith of the people. Had Gaddiel not seen the Prophet in person, he also would have dismissed the report once and forever, as the effervescence of popular wit. But this Man of Nazareth had impressed him as a king, haloed in flaming dignity, and radiating heavenly grace. He was inapproachable to the insults of a dastardly scoffer. He would undoubtedly be the first to disclaim the credit for such a stupendous deed, if his title to extraordinary powers rested on superstition, or on the enthusiasm of the populace. It would be worth while, Gaddiel thought, to watch this mysterious Man more closely. Israel was awaiting the advent of her King; she had these latter years often pinned her faith to the audacity of pretenders and usurpers, who had ever failed most ignominiously to legitimize their claims: yet, come He must. But why should Gaddiel Ben Simon, who held the luring cup of sweetest bliss to his lips, trouble himself now about kings and leaders? Time would tell the fate of the Man of Nazareth; if he is the Emmanuel; if he will go up to Jerusalem, and announce himself before prince and priest as the Anointed of the Lord, and gather the select about

¹ II Kings, 4, 1-6.

himself; then he, too, would hasten to his standards. "Ah," he thought, his color heightening for the joy of the discovery, "the feast of the Pasch is at hand. I shall go up — will Miriam also celebrate the national festivities? — and the Prophet surely will go up; haply he shall make the Great Feast the occasion of his Manifestation."

Now they had again arrived in the court. Gaddiel dismounted and, placing his hand beneath Miriam's foot, supported her as she sprang down, but deftly caught her in his arm, and for an instant pressed her passionately to his breast. She disdained to acknowledge this impropriety, but turned to the mare, against whose soft mouth she pressed her cheek, and purred: "Pretty Chuza, baby mine," and such other terms of endearment, as made Gaddiel envious of the favors lavished on the beast.

"Bestow these bits of love on me," he whispered to her, putting his face into her veil and hair, "and let me requite thee for them."

But she withdrew her head from the proximity of his lips, and laughingly beckoned to Rapha, who was coming up from the servants' lodgings.

"Rapha," she said, "put these beasts in the stable, and have good care of them. This one is mine own," patting the mane of the mare, "and I charge thee with her keeping. Treat her as tenderly as if she were my child; she is a precious pledge," with a glance of compliment at the happy youth; "Rapha, I appoint and constitute thee governor of my whole estate in the place of Judas, whom I have dismissed. Let this appointment stand in the witness of Gaddiel Ben Simon!"

Then she beckoned to Gaddiel with her witching eyes to accompany her to the mansion. The young man leaped at her side, speechless for the wonder of such exceptional condescension.

When Rapha heard that she had accepted the mare as a gift from Gaddiel, whose secrets he knew and hated for

the sake of his mistress, he was ready with a malediction on both the gift and the giver; but when the never dreamed of stewardship dropped in his lap, he was struck helpless with happiness. He did not regret the dismissal of his former friend and fellow, for Judas had often forgotten, while in office, that Rapha had once been his friend: their mutual respect and consideration had dwindled to mere formalities. But could it be true? "I am much the better of Judas," he grunted, "in manner and method!" And then he raised his voice and chanted after the manner of the chanting of public prayers: "The God of my fathers be blessed, that I have found grace in the eyes of my noble mistress! A thousandfold blessing be upon her beauty, and a hundred-fold upon her substance!" With this benediction he led the beasts into the stable, where he sat down between them for a little while, and told them of his happiness.



When Judas had left Gaddiel standing bewildered in the court, he wandered into the garden. He must now keep his wits about him. Here was surely come a foe, dangerous to his interests in as far as the jealousy of the new lover and his indiscretion would undo the future plans of the steward. Judas had not understood his summary dismissal from the presence of his mistress as a dismissal from office. He feared also that Thamar would recover under the care of her experienced medical adviser, whose skill was not unknown to Judas. And above all these danger signals he presently discovered one of his own placing: as he looked up at the window of last night's fire, he saw how wofully he had bungled in opening a barred window to conceal his misdeed. A flood of shame rushed into his face, that he should have been so imprudent and awkward. Once more he thrust his hand into the folds of his woolen cincture to assure himself of the safety of his treasures, the profit of his crimes, and having

reached the hedge of the garden he departed, ostentatiously shaking the dust from his feet. He had stored away in the wine vaults a considerable sum of money and valuable trinkets, which he must leave behind; the ground was too hot to make tarrying comfortable. He might be able later to take them away; he could not bear them away now at all events. If only the crisis could have been postponed a day or two!

He sulked along the road for a while, his dagger clutched in his hand under the coat, until he heard the rapid clatter of hoofs in his rear, whereupon he crept into the clumps of vines and shrubbery which fringed the highway, to let the riders pass by. In the twinkling of an eye, Miriam and Gaddiel sped past at a fast gallop. His eyes glistened through his pleached lair like those of a basilisk.

"I will hasten to Capernaum," he said, "and denounce the antics of this precocious knave of the princess of Magedan to old Simon! What a lucky stroke: to wreck the boy's sinful ambitions, and heap up the anger and madness of the Pharisee over the Sinner's head."

He crept deeper into the thicket, and proceeded bent and bowed, for he was taller than the shrubbery, and would not risk detection after he had resolved upon the precious scheme, until he struck a bridle-path, which turned down toward the bridge of Meddor, about an hour's way from the villa of Simon Bar Jehu, the chief of the Pharisees of Capernaum, Gaddiel's father.

Once on the path that was frequented only by busy travelers, who passed each other with a mistrustful, brief *Sholom*, he cut himself a staff and, trimming it as he hurried on, set out in earnest on his mission of evil. But when he was near his goal, his journey was cut short quite unexpectedly; he fell upon Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples, reclining in the grass at the roadside for rest. He came upon them unawares, like the unsuspecting deer upon the screened huntsman.

The Prophet was at that moment ending a parable,¹ and Simon said to him: "Lord, dost thou speak this parable to us or likewise to all?"

And the Prophet answered: "Who, thinkest thou, is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord setteth over his family, to give them their measure of wheat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom, when his Lord shall come, he shall find so doing. Verily I say to you, he will set him over all that he possesseth. But if that servant shall say in his heart: My lord is long a coming; and shall begin to strike the men-servants and the maidens, and to eat and to drink, and to be drunk: the lord of that servant will come in the day that he hopeth not, and at the hour that he knoweth not, and shall separate him, and shall appoint him his portion with unbelievers, and that servant who knew the will of his lord, and prepared not himself and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes"

Simon and the others wondered and were uneasy. Did the Master wish to reprove them for some fault of the past, or to warn them against failings to come? And Simon pressed his question: "Who is that wicked servant?"

At this Jesus turned his eyes towards the thicket across the road, and the disciples, following his look, beheld Judas emerging from the bushes, a right disagreeably surprised man.

After a brief, but, on the part of the disciples, cordial greeting, Judas sat down in their midst. He was hungry and thirsty, and partook liberally of the simple fare set before him. Seeing that he was fatigued, generous Simon drew forth a skin of wine, which he had secreted under his coat spread in the grass, and offered it to Judas, who embraced it with affection, and sucking the orifice deep into his mouth, quaffed so greedily that Simon manifested much alarm, and stretched out his hands after it. Upon Judas's return-

¹ Luke, 12, 36-47.

ing it, Simon squeezed it with both hands in order to attract the attention of his brethren, and finding it very flabby and soft, put it away with a look of disapproval and disgust. It was a drop of the wine of the wedding, which Simon had secured for the refreshment of his wayworn brethren.

When they had continued their journey for a few hundred paces, Jesus fell behind, where Judas was walking alone.

"Judas," he began, "I have something to say to thee."

"Master, speak!" Judas replied, his hand buried in his sash, grasping his treasure. He resolved that he would not part with it, even at the Prophet's asking.

"Judas," Jesus resumed, "I bid thee come after me. Hast thou put thine house in order?"

"I have not had time, Master mine; but if thou grant me another leave of a few days, I shall dispose of my belongings, and come after thee."

"Judas, Judas! Twice have I called thee, and thou wouldest not heed. Go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor; thou shalt have a treasure in heaven. Mammon is a curse upon the minister of the good tidings of the Kingdom of God."

"Master, as thou sayest." But he avoided the glance of the Master, and looked to the ground.

At a crossroad, Judas turned to Jesus, who had walked in silence, saying:

"Master, I must to Simon, the Pharisee, to take him message from his son Gaddiel. I must leave thee here; but I will meet thee at the house of Simon," motioning his head in the direction of the disciple of that name.

The master replied:

"Do not go to Simon, but go about thy business. Gaddiel will not come to grief in the house of Miriam. Do not go to Simon!" he added earnestly.

"As thou biddest me, Master," Judas answered, and

stayed in the company; "I will dispose of the little that I have at the synagogue."

"And," Jesus said to him, raising a finger in warning, "forget not the orchard that thou boughtest at Cana. Restore the price of it to the rightful owner. Divest thyself of all that thou hast gathered together; for Mammon is a blighting curse upon the work of the worker in the vineyard of the Father."

Judas looked offended. But he did not dare to make excuses to him, who had revealed a most intimate knowledge of the source of his wealth. He became very much embarrassed as Jesus proceeded:

"The thieves and the covetous, and the adulterers, and the murderers shall not see the Kingdom of Heaven. But the poor in spirit shall enter therein."

"Fine company, this, in which he reckons me," thought Judas to himself; "why does he call me, why does he not let me go my way?" Jesus seemed to read his thoughts, and went on:

"Saul fell from his estate, and departed in despair because of his covetousness, although Samuel had anointed him King over the people in the name of God. See that thou make thyself worthy of thy calling!"

Jesus mingled again with the others, and left Judas in the hands of Simon, whom curiosity, it seemed, had prompted to step out of the way and await the twain.

"What hath the Master said to thee?" he began; "he hath shown thee great favor."

"He hath given me advice how to dispose of my small possessions," Judas answered without a moment's hesitation. "I shall do his bidding in the city. But it hurts me much, Simon, to part with the price of the sweat of my brow. And who may now know what may betide us if his plans fail?"

"Put thy heart at rest, Iscariot," Simon assured him.

"He hath power to make wine of water, and, I trow, to make bread of stones. Thou shalt not want and hunger in his company."

"Is it true, then, without deception and collusion: Simon, did he make that wine, that generous quantity of good wine? Then some day may bring a repetition of the miracle of the oil of Sarepta, and we may find our reckoning for parting with our trash."

"It is as true as the day," answered Simon; "dost thou not believe it?"

"May not thy enthusiasm construe his liberal gift into a miracle?"

"My enthusiasm doth not sit in mine eyes," Simon rejoined with much spirit.

"Or may not a wag among your company have spread the story?" Judas persisted.

Simon flared up like a bundle of straw on fire:

"And dost thou think the Master would tolerate the imposition of a lie upon the people? or that the people would be carried away with veneration of him by the hearing of a joke? Have we not seen it? Have not all the guests, and the groom, and the waiters, and the steward, seen it, tasted it, and thanked him? Go to, Judas; thou art halt of understanding!"

Simon had spoken so loud that some of the company looked back at him with an indulgent smile; they knew Simon, the enthusiast. But he left Judas alone, and joined the rest, and going up to the Master asked him to convince Judas, or to chide him for his unbelief.

But, "Let it be so, Simon, for the present," Jesus said; "the cedars have not grown up in a day."

Simon was not at all satisfied. He argued the case of Judas with each one, and expressed his dissatisfaction with Judas's qualifications. He would turn him away even now, and trouble no longer with a "numb-skull."

Amid debates and wranglings they arrived at the walls of Capernaum. The Master interfered in their animated discussion only upon appeal, and then chiefly by exhorting them to charity and harmony. At last Judas assented, and protested his belief. But Simon doubted his sincerity, and continued long to mutter to himself about "a man whom it took a caravan of witnesses to convince." He grumbled like a receding thunder shower, and now and then spat forth a flash of the fire that was still burning within him. But when they arrived at his house, he coerced Judas to enter and refresh himself.

By a circuitous route Judas went to the bank, and not to the synagogue, to deposit his hoard of gold. He retained the smaller denominations of silver and the stone, and offered his orchard for sale.

In a few days, he was informed, they would tell him whether they could accept his offer. Then Judas returned to the house of Simon. As soon as he entered, he approached Jesus, saying:

"I have done as thou hast bidden me do."

And Jesus answered severely: "And dost thou not know the fate of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha?"¹

Judas's face fell, and glad that the others had not heard the rebuke, he slunk away into a dark corner, confused with anger and shame.



The evening of the same day Thamar returned to consciousness. The damsels of Miriam had faithfully carried out Rapha's directions, and thus snatched her from death. When she first opened her eyes with the clear expression of intelligent surveying of her surroundings, the young women, in the exuberance of their joy, leaped and danced about her couch, clapped their hands, and praised the goodness of their God. For the little stranger who had been

¹ II Kings, 5.

overlooked before had now, by her suffering, won the love and sympathy of their hearts. Gradually, as the fervor of their demonstrations subsided, they crowded round her, kneeling on the floor, and patted her cheeks and neck, stroked her hair and arms, and, when the first faint smile of gratitude rippled over her lips, Hannah, the principal over them, hugged her to her breast. Such profusion of caressing had never been lavished on the poor child; she was overcome by so much manifestation of affection, and began to weep: a heart brimful of joy runs over as surely as one filled with sorrow; only, foolish as is the human breast, it often makes squeamish resistance against joy.

Yet despite her joy, her first question was of Judas, where he might be; what he might be about? She may have had a recollection of his visit to her in the vineyard in the early morning, or of his fearful threat in the nightly garden.

Amid the questioning Miriam entered the hall and, hearing the words, drew near to her, and with much affection, bending down her face, whispered:

“He may be following Jesus of Nazareth; he hath left the house, and I have appointed Rapha in his place.”

“And the purse?” the child asked timidly.

“He has with him; and may it bring him ruin!” Miriam threatened; “he has stolen the stone that my brother bought for me from an Ethiopian prince at a price that one would pay for a villa with a square mile¹ of vineyards and olive gardens. Do not grow faint again,” she said tenderly, as the child seemed to be overcome by some unbearable emotion.

Miriam studied the dark little face very attentively for some time, and concluded that the maid had a secret to reveal. The mistress, therefore, dismissed the young women with a wave of the hand, and settling Thamar com-

¹ A Roman mile, $\frac{1}{4}$ of an English mile.

fortably in her arms, encouraged her to tell what caused her this severe spell of illness; "for," she said, "it is not thy hurt alone that has made thee so very ill. What hath he done to thee?"

The child understood that she referred to Judas, and replied, slowly and hesitatingly, once raising her head in alarm and turning her eyes towards the door, when Rapha passed by outside.

"He hath done me no bodily harm. But he hath threatened to wrench my head from my body, and to cast it to the dogs, and to throw me into the lake; he would have killed me in cold blood, had I not fled from him." Then her voice fell into the deep gurgling tones of unutterable pain and bitterness, as she continued:

"But what grieves me more than this threat to kill me — he said, that the dogs were fit company for such hireling as I be! I am not so base, so selfish, in truth, mistress mine, that I should be rated with the filthy jackals in the street!"

And the poor child, exasperated beyond control, sobbed so vehemently, that Miriam bade her lie down again; "lest thou faint anew," she said with much concern.

Thamar soon sobbed herself into slumber; she was sick and exhausted, and nature peremptorily asked her tribute. But Miriam, after covering the child's face with her own veil to protect it from the inquisitive flies, sat a long time in thoughtful silence. Her pale cheeks, her quivering eyelids, and her twitching mouth betrayed the upheaval which was working havoc with her soul. "Thank God," she ejaculated, after a pause of staring reflection, "thank God, that I have been preserved from the hands of that madman!"

She knelt down beside the bed, and buried her face in her hands, convulsed with the uproar of terror in her breast. At last a flood of tears, so vehement that the hot streamlets were forced through her closed fingers, ministered a timely relief. "Oh, thank God!" she sighed, as she arose; "I have not deserved so great a mercy!"

But Miriam, undisciplined Miriam, sought not deliverance at the Throne of Mercy; the thought of God's undeserved bounty only exaggerated her dread of His wrath.

There was a storm brewing and thick darkness was brooding over the lake. Miriam drew her cloak over her head, and going out to call the maids walked sad and heavy of heart towards the palace.

On the way she met Rapha. The wind was now howling over the water, and whipped the spray far over the shore. It was one of the storms that break suddenly over the beautiful and placid Sea of Gennesar, and often fall upon the fishermen without warning, scattering their flotillas far and wide, and spreading danger and terror. Only the skilful and strong can cope with its wicked capers.

Miriam touched Rapha's arm, and turning him around to face the raging waters pointed out into the night, saying earnestly:

"Make ready my skiff, and take me out."

Rapha stood dismayed. But he knew his mistress too well to attempt dissuading her from her mad resolve. It was worth his life to brave this uproar; but he would prove his prowess and his devotion. Was it not great honor and gain to be made her steward? Should he disappoint her on the first day that she had elevated him from the rest as the keeper of all her possessions? He would prove himself to be *her* keeper also. He made the boat ready.

Miriam returned from the house, whither she had gone to put on a long and heavy cloak, and hurrying down to the shore stepped into the frail boat. The next moment her ferryman pushed off and, seating himself, plied the oars with great skill and energy.

"Out into the teeth of the storm," cried Miriam through the howling of the wind and the hissing and whirling of the waves. The tumult seemed to increase as the boat

pushed its nose into the midst of it. One moment the frail bark would skip along over foaming crests rising in quick succession like the heads of many angry dragons from the deep, the next it would stand almost perpendicular on its stern, only to pitch to the one side or the other, or fall back and bury its beak, and with it its mad occupant with her flying hair and veil up to her arms, in the white clouds of spray. Rapha had taken the precaution to stretch a piece of canvas across the forepart, the flaps of which Miriam had fastened about her waist. It would prevent the sudden flooding of the boat in an ordinary storm, and, if he had his way of steering the craft; but he had to go out "into the teeth" of the storm so that he had little choice of managing. He became alarmed at the desperateness of this hazard. The darkness had become so deep that it oppressed him. The wind assailed him from all sides at once; the water shot in screaming streams, like the stinging lashes of a whip, across his face. He was wet through, and the water was cold. Suddenly, as the boat reared and turned eccentrically on its stern, he raised himself to his full height, his back almost touching the bottom of the ungovernable craft, and braced his feet against the planks of the stern, in a superhuman effort to prevent the boat from falling over him headlong. Miriam was pitched from her seat, and shot down the bottom and between his feet like a wedge, knocking them from under him; he lost an oar in the effort to support himself, and they were helpless. For an instant he lay in the bottom of the boat, dazed by the realization of their doom. The next instant, the rioting waters snatched the other oar from his grasp, and the boat pirouetted and danced in the wild whirl. Miriam raised herself on her knees with great difficulty, and was about to gather in with one hand her mantle, that had been blown open, while she clutched the side of the boat with the other, when a large wave dashed over the boat and swamped it. She was submerged for a moment;

and feeling the drawing of the boat toward the deep, she shouted in terror: "Jesus of Nazareth, save us!" and with a soughing dash they were pitched upon the sand.

They had not been far out "in the teeth of the storm"; the storm would not let the light craft make headway against it. They had been cast about with wind and waves in all directions. But Miriam was so exhausted that Rapha was obliged to carry her home in his arms. Her maid Hannah assisted her to put off the wet garments and make ready for a much craved rest. Before she retired, however, she knelt down, turning her head toward Jerusalem, and stretched out her arms in prayer: "Jesus of Nazareth, if thou be the Promised of the fathers, give me strength to follow thee!"

And Hannah, who was much surprised, fervently cried: "Amen!"



CHAPTER V

AN UNWELCOME REVELATION

Two days after the terrible experience on the raging waters, Miriam received news from fishermen touching at Magedan on their way from Bethsaida to the fishmarket at Tarichæa that the new Prophet was causing an ever spreading deep commotion along the northern coast by his strange teachings. The people flocked from all sides to hear him; they themselves had heard him preaching to thousands from the top of a hill. And strange in truth was his teaching: "The Kingdom of Heaven was at hand; it was for the little ones in this world to seize; it were virtuous to give the left cheek to him who smites thee on the right; it were better to be lame in the Kingdom of Heaven, than to go to hell with both feet! Thus the hypocrites would be brought to judgment"; but the burden of his sermon was: "The Kingdom of Heaven is come upon you."

Some thought he was carrying the teaching of John into Galilee; but others pointed to his authoritative words in proof of his independence of John. He never says: "Thus doth John command you," nor as John, merely quote the words of the prophets: "Prepare the way of the Lord, as saith the prophet Isaiah," nor as the prophets of old: "Thus saith the Lord"; but he assumes the words as his own: "I say to you," or "Unless ye do this or that," on his own authority. The people admired his fearlessness, and rejoiced in the sweetness of his words: "If God clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, and feed the fish of the deep, which know not the

light of the day, and keep the fowls of the air, which do not sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns: shall he not much more clothe and feed and keep you, O ye of little faith." The fishermen predicted confidently that they would cast aside their nets, and drive in golden chariots over land, and wear the purple of princes, and feast on the fat of the land, when the new Kingdom of the great Prophet were come upon them.

When Miriam heard of the gentleness of the new teacher, she resolved to go and hear him. She would learn, she thought, what it was that inspired her dread of hearing him in person. She had learnt from the fearful danger of death in the deep of the lake that she must leave the road that she was pursuing. But whither should she turn? The Prophet perhaps would point the way. Give up her property? Flee the company of "Sinners"? Do penance, as John preacheth? The first she would not do; her estate was the heritage of the family for ages. The other — was it necessary? Were the Pharisees better men for their strict observance of the rubbish they had heaped about the olden law, and for their neglect of the deeds of charity that she herself practised so lavishly and readily? And the last — doing penance in sackcloth and ashes! Did the Pharisees not tear their garments, and sprinkle ashes on their heads, and still lay hands on the orchards of the widows and the pennies of the orphans?

She had committed no injustice; she had never slandered, she had never hated anyone, but Judas, who richly deserved it: for what could she make amends to God?

True, her sister Martha at Bethania had also done no evil in her life; and yet she was sighing piously for the advent of him whose picture as an infant, born amid the chanting of the angels, as adored by the Magi from Aram, as a child giving answer to the wise teachers in the Temple, had filled her heart in her childhood with the sweet hope of one day

seeing the Messiah that was to come, and now filled it with a tender, yearning love; "but I have heard Martha hath lately gloried, that John pointed him out with his finger, the 'Lamb of God.' In this I," she said, "the younger and more audacious sister, am made happier; I have seen him!" "Happier?" — She said it loud to herself, and was startled to derive such an inconsistent conclusion from her musings. "Happier? — No; yet not unhappy! Could I but dismiss this dread of him! I will go to hear him! I will know wherein is the difference between Martha and myself."

Accordingly she ordered her own mare made ready for the journey to Capernaum. She would not drive Chuza; she felt the impropriety of displaying the gift of her boy-lover in the Prophet's presence. Rapha and Omer, her two trusted servants, would keep her company for guards, and Hannah and Thamar for gossips.

The next day they set out at a very early hour, as the country was astir with the break of day. In an hour they had reached Capernaum, but were informed that the new Prophet was holding forth a little further up, above Bethsaida which they reached in time to see in the distance the snow-capped Hermon light up and glow and blush in the first kiss of the morning sun. "Thabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy name: Thy arm is with might,"¹ exclaimed Rapha at the inspiring sight, and turned his head to point out the fire-flaming peak to the women.

"For the Lord is our defence; and the Holy one of Israel is our King," ejaculated Hannah; and Thamar ventured timidly:

"If Jesus of Nazareth be the King of Israel?"

"Then we will crown him with the wreaths of the vineyards and the bloom of the fields, and with much rejoicing and great triumph lead him to the City of David, and place him on the throne of his father, to rule over the nations for-

¹ Ps. 88, 13.

ever!" Miriam responded merrily, but not irreverently, and added with a twinkle in her eyes: "For if he be the Nezer,¹ he must come out of Galilee, the Blooming."

They passed through Bethsaida, causing little curiosity, except by the richness of their attire; for Miriam was generous even towards her servants, and prided herself on her good taste of dress, and her smartness of presentation, as the great ones, who courted her society, expected of one so wealthy and so refined. A small league farther north, close by the water's edge, they came upon a large concourse of people, assembled in a narrow valley, with hills and cliffs about them on three sides, and the lake in front. They dismounted together, and Miriam, throwing the reins to Rapha, advanced between her maids into the thickly standing crowd toward a space in the center which appeared to be open, when one looked over the heads. As she pressed forward, she heard the people near her pronounce her name, some with pity, some with insolence, but more with the cutting accents of scriptural reproach. She blushed, and would stop; but it would not do now to remain in the midst of these unfriendly masses. She must press on to where HE was, to find rest in the silent reverence which the ignorant populace bore his presence.

When they reached the open space, Thamar uttered a cry of joy and, springing forward, knelt and put her arms about the knees of a man who was standing in the midst of a group of men seated on the ground on their mantles: it was Jesus of Nazareth. He must just have risen to his feet. With a smile that manifested the very depths of tenderness, he raised up the young maiden, laid his right hand upon her head, and said:

"Blessed are the little ones, for of such is the Kingdom of God."

Simon, who sat in the grass at the feet of Jesus,

¹ Flower, or Sprout: Isaiah, 2, 1; Matth. 2, 23.

tugged at the coat of the maid, and drew her away with a frown.

Just then there was a stir and turning of heads among the mass. Two men brought unto him a cripple, who was lame from childhood. They besought the good Master to bless him, and he laid his hands upon him, and the man sprang to his feet, whole. As he realized that he was healed, he shouted for joy, and falling down at the feet of his benefactor thanked him with a loud voice. And the people becoming aware of the deed shouted together, and sprang in the air, and clapped their hands, and cried out:

"A great prophet is risen among us, and God hath visited his people."

Among those close to Jesus was also Simon, the Pharisee, with a few more of his sect. He witnessed the healing; but when the people hailed the new Prophet with loud acclaim, he contemptuously ran his fingers through his flowing beard, and pursed his lips with disdain. "Prophet!" he drawled, within earshot of the Master; "Prophet? Like John, the fanatic, grown up in the desert, and ignorant of the amenities of life, and the exactions of the Law. Prophet? A charlatan, too ignorant to teach, and too conceited to be silent. These upstarts lead the people astray from the Law of the fathers."

Jesus did not betray his sentiments at the caustic comment of the Pharisee with as much even as turning toward him. But Simon, the disciple, arose, and asked:

"Wilt thou that I pitch him into the sea?" But he said (and the Pharisee could hear it): "Peace, Simon; not all Israelites are children of Abraham, and the promises of the Father are not of such."

Miriam was overwhelmed. Such beauty and grace she had never seen, such absolute self-possession amid the applause of hundreds was amazing, and the slight, scarcely perceptible shadow of sadness cast over his eyes and lips

made him appear a stranger in the world. He appeared to her in the midst of the throng about him as a cedar of Lebanon transplanted to the plains; as a tower in the desert, as a light in the dark. She was so overcome with the awe of his presence that she nervously groped for the hand of Hannah, and dreading every moment that he might turn his sad eyes upon her, she drew down her veil over her eyes. And lo, as if he had waited until she had shielded herself against his look, presently he looked at her. It was a long, searching gaze; she felt he was reading her soul. She began to tremble, grew hot and cold with the same breath, and was about to imitate Thamar's example and cast herself down before him. She drew up her bare and bespangled arms into her cloak; she pulled the silken wrap which lay very loose about her throat and shoulders into narrower folds, and tucked the lower part of it into her bodice. It was the first time in her life that she was ashamed of the display of her charms in the sight of a man; nay, she was ashamed of her very flesh in his presence, such was the purity and majesty of his countenance.

She hung her head like a wilted rose. She did not dare, although she much desired, to move away. She was under the spell of his secret power, helpless, as the benighted wayfarer amid the tumult of a roaring storm of lightning and thunder. Yet she felt that the bolt would not strike her. With all his majesty he was so gentle, that his reproachful gaze fell into her soul like the light of liberation into a dark dungeon.

When she timidly raised her eyes, he was speaking to Simon, his disciple, and with more fear than boldness she sought one who must not witness her discomfiture, Judas. But he was not there.

As the tumult had almost subsided, the Prophet mounted a sandhill, that elevated him by the height of his shoulders over the heads of his hearers, and began to preach, The

burden of his sermon was an earnest exhortation to repentance, "for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.¹ But who doth believe our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For the Messiah shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground. He is acquainted with grief; but ye hide your faces from Him, and despise Him. The chastisement of your peace shall be upon Him; the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. For the Lord hath called Israel as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the kindness of the Lord shall not depart from her, neither shall the covenant of His peace be removed.² The fulness of time hath come to thee, O Israel! Repent, therefore, and be converted to thy shepherd!"

Such and similar words he spoke to them, to bring back to their minds the glorious promises which Jahveh had made to their fathers through the mouth of His prophets, and to prepare them for the full revelation of the plans of God by himself. And when he had finished, he departed from them, and went to the home of Jonah, Simon's father, with his few followers. On the way, he opened the eyes of a blind man, drove out devils, and healed other infirmities; sometimes by a word, sometimes by a touch of his hand, but with the same quiet serenity always. Many followed him for a distance out of curiosity; some hailed him loudly for the Great Prophet, whom Moses had foretold, others gaped unthinkingly at the man who could do such wondrous things, and speak such gracious words; in some also the unspeakably sweet hope began to dawn, that the Messiah was even now in their midst, and that it was he by whom the Kingdom of Heaven was to be brought nigh.

"Be still," they recited fervently under their breath, "and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the

¹ Matt. 4, 17.

² Isa. 53, 54.

heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge: Amen, Amen.”¹

Miriam gathered her small party about herself and left as soon as the Master had disappeared. During his discourse she had hung on his lips. And when he spoke of “the woman forsaken and grieved in spirit,” she looked at him, anxiously awaiting the comparison: “as the one ye behold here in your midst.” But he neither made the dreaded allusion, nor even looked at her; and she thanked him in her heart. Some of the bystanders had furtively glanced in her direction; and the Pharisee Simon had had a broad smile on his face, when, as the dreadful words fell like silver chimes from the Master’s lips, he leered at her over the shoulders of those who stood between them. Her vain dread was proof of her complete misunderstanding of the Master’s purpose. He had come to teach “the ways of the Lord,” not to smite the sinner with the “edge of the tongue.” She thought he would chide her, and he wanted to open her eyes, as those of all that heard him. They were busy with reckoning up their own littleness, and he, with leading them to the understanding of the great things of their salvation. He was about “His Father’s business,” and they about their own. It was not his words; it was his personality and his wonderful deeds that held them quiet at his feet. What a task, to feed the bread of Salvation to such fastidious souls!

Miriam had not profited much by his sermon; she had heard those things read in the synagogue time and again, and her familiarity with them blunted their edge. True, the living words, spoken from such pure lips, gained new significance: it was like opening an old book and finding a chapter not yet read. But in connection with what has already been read and judged, it must fare the way of the

¹ Ps. 46, 10-11.

old and familiar. If "familiarity breeds contempt," familiarity with religious truth, not deduced into practice, breeds loathing. It is too far above the reach of the indolent of mind to inspire emulation, and too glorious to fuse with the dross of sensuality. There is mortal enmity between the blessed humility of adoration and the wretched pride of self-glorification. Pride and faith are incompatible.

Rapha was very pensive. He had heard every word falling upon his ear as clear and strong as the sound of the hammer on the anvil. The healing of the cripple did not make much impression on him; he had not seen it, and was slow of belief. Hannah looked like a rose after a refreshing rain; blooming, bright, sober, tearful. She could have cast herself at his feet, she said, just to show her feeling for him. But her fervor cooled presently, when she complained of being hungry. Omer's face was a sealed book. While they were exchanging comments, he persevered stubbornly in looking ahead, and keeping still. He had never spoken much, but such absolute silence under these circumstances was marvelous, if not uncanny. At his side rode Thamar equally silent, and equally steadfastly looking into distance; but her gaze was elevated, living, the witness of a new revelation within. If the lips of the man were closed by apathy, hers were sealed by wonder. When she felt the touch of His hand upon her head, a tremor ran through her body, in the charm of which she was even now held with the self-oblivion of happiness unspeakable.

They rode on in silence until they had passed Caper-naum. As they crossed the bridge of the Kinnereth, they were surprised to see Judas sitting by the wayside. When Thamar came up to him, he arose, and pressed into her hand a small package, and disappeared beneath the bridge before Miriam and Rapha had had time to recover from the unpleasant surprise which his appearance had caused them. Thamar opened the package, riding slowly to let the

mistress come up; she found in it the precious sapphire that Miriam priced so much, and handed it to her.

"Thank God," Miriam exclaimed; "he could not exchange it!"

But Thamar gently remonstrated: "Haply he hath changed his evil ways."

Miriam would not disillusion the good child. She did not believe that Judas would sincerely follow Jesus, more than that she herself would go after him.

She had thought over the memorable meeting. Jesus of Nazareth was a visionary, a man of wonderful power of presence; but what of the joys of life, if one would be as sober as he? A young man, come from the mountain village of Nazareth: what could he have learnt of life? The prophets whom he quoted were old literature; the warnings which he sounded, commonplaces of the Essenes, of John, of the Chasidim. What would the Kingdom of heaven be like? There is no heaven here below unless it be of one's own making. And there is no sin but to be foolish. What is sin? As far as she herself was reputed a "sinner," she only imitated the manners of the most polished people she knew, the Greeks, in deportment and attire; and as to the wild escapades of her youth: it was so natural to be transported beyond the level of propriety, at times, by the blandishments of youth and beauty! Did not God endow the Greek with the instinct of the beautiful? Did not God make man and woman for each other's society and comfort? "I will make him a helpmate"! What if she shirked the yoke of wedlock? Did the most eminent men not divorce their wives at whim? Has not their very Tetrarch taken the wife of his brother Philip to his bosom? And Philip is still living! And Herod makes his sacrifice at the Temple every year, and the high priest does not forbid him! Avast! Jesus of Nazareth is a fanatic! Healing the cripple — who knows but it is not the work of Beelzebub spreading anew

the old snare of tempting the people to rebellion against their conquerors and superiors, the Romans? If Israel was to be freed, everyone would be King. I will never more see the "prophet" of my own will!

She had placed in opposition Gaddiel, the young Pharisee, and Jesus. She had never, before he made her the splendid gift, worthy of a queen, thought more of the advances of the young man than that they were a tribute to her beauty. Now she could not help but measure his devotion by his sacrifices; and if woman loves, she loves for greatness. Gaddiel had given her a fortune. And the danger of detection by his father, whom she despised as heartily as he despised her, added zest to the love-making. Oh, she would grant him another rendezvous, an be it at "the risk of her soul" — another threat of the "prophet." She would marry him, if only to drive the old one to his grave. What the flattery of the great ones, and the wit of the learned, and the cunning of the worldlings had not accomplished, Gaddiel had succeeded to wring from her: that she thought him worthy of her love. She would love him despite his haughty sire, and despite the fanatical preacher of Nazareth!

As they turned in from the road of Damascus toward the mansion, Miriam asked of Rapha his opinion of the new Prophet. He had apparently not yet reached a satisfactory conclusion for himself, or already dismissed the subject from his mind as of less importance for the present than his own new duties and position. Still he thought that if the words of Isaiah were to be repeated in the mouth of the Anointed of the Lord, Jesus of Nazareth had spoken them with striking propriety. This was the only vivid impression that he carried away from the sermon, the eminent suitableness of the speaker and his words; this he indicated to Miriam and then proceeded:

"If the Messiah be come, it is he; not because of the power of his hand, but because of the fitness of his words. And

if Israel is to be reunited, and the Gentiles even are to enter the fold of the Shepherd,¹ he shall gather the elect from the four winds, and become the beacon light in the darkness of the nations. I was at the Temple when his mother presented him to the Lord, her first-born, and I bear witness that Simeon the Just took him upon his arms, and holding him up toward the Holy of Holies, cried out with the voice of prophecy: ‘The Light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the Glory of Thy people Israel’; and he said that the child was the Christ of the Lord. I made a visit at Nazareth, when a young man, during his childhood, and hence recognized him immediately at the wedding. He is the same at whose presentation that blessing and prophecy was pronounced, the same that astonished the Scribes by his answers in the Temple at his first legal visit, the same that John has signaled as the ‘Lamb of God.’ Thou shalt hear still greater things concerning him.”

Miriam had listened attentively and with reawakening alarm. She spoke with less confidence when she asked:

“And dost thou believe that he is the Emmanuel?”

“I have not yet answered this question for myself, mistress mine,” the servant answered pensively: but Miriam, who was observing him very closely, noticed that his conservatism was due to his doubts about her own position on this question; and, therefore, in order to dispel his misgivings, she anticipated his answer, encouraging him with the assurance that “she had herself often wondered how neatly the descriptions of the Messiah in the prophets fitted him.”

“He was born at Bethlehem, during the Census,” she continued, “and Bethlehem is to bring forth the Ruler;² the princes of the East made him offering and did him homage, and his royal father David has announced that the

¹ Ezech. 34, 23: “And I will set up one shepherd over them.”

² Micah, 5, 2.

Kings of the Arabs and of Sheba shall bring him gifts;¹ the graciousness of his discourse is the admiration of all that hear him, and his compassion with the oppressed, his noble condescension to the lowly, has of late often made the words of the prophet ring anew in my ears as in my childhood days: ‘He hath anointed me to preach the good tidings to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted’.² Verily the Scriptures are fulfilled in our eyes.”

“But,” assented Rapha seriously, “if all the Scriptures must be fulfilled in him, he must suffer and die, and thus enter into his glory; for it is also written of him: ‘He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter — the Lamb of God, as John saith of him; — he was taken from prison and from judgment; and he made his grave with the wicked; it pleased the Lord to bruise him, for he bore the sin of many.’ And then recall that shout of triumph ringing through the ages of the past: ‘And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his sepulcher shall be in glory!’”³

“Verily,” faltered Miriam, “the counsels of the Lord are hidden! Why must the Savior of the nation die? Shall he not be the Emmanuel, and the Son of the Virgin?”

“Ay, he shall be more; he shall be the Son of God!” cried Thamar, who had fallen behind a little, and had been an interested listener to their conversation.

Miriam was startled.

“The Son of God,” she exclaimed with eyes wide open in terror as at a revelation that she had dreaded long; “the Son of God!” she repeated, frightened; “child, whence this blasphemy?”

“His mother told me, and I believe it. Is not John a great prophet? And he said of the Master: ‘He is greater than I.’ Was not David a King? and he adores the Christ

¹ Ps. 71, 10.

² Isaiah, 61, 1.

³ Isaiah, 11, 10.

as his Lord.¹ And Jesus is the Christ," she concluded with a firmness of conviction, strange enough in a stranger to the religious traditions of the Jews.

But the lack of acquaintance with the traditional image of the Messiah was, perhaps, a saving grace for her. That image was by no means complete and clear in the minds of the people, trodden under the iron heel of the pagans, discouraged at the seeming procrastination of their deliverance, and torn asunder by internal strife among political factions and religious sects. The grandeur of the prophetic conception of the Emmanuel had gradually been dimmed in consequence of hopes deferred at first, and lastly made selfish and mean by the crying earthly necessity of peace and harmony. When now they expected the Prince of Peace,² it was in the role of a powerful deliverer from political disorder and subjection. This condition of the field made it fertile of the quarrels of the leaders, rebels and usurpers, and barren of the fruit of the great Teacher's labors.

But there was also in the hearts of many the peace and comfort of the vision of Isaiah: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Father of the world to come, The Prince of Peace. His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace."³

Rapha spoke from the abundance of this secret comfort when, after a little more wrangling between Miriam and Thamar on the possibility of the Messiahship in Jesus of Nazareth, he burst upon them with the zeal of one who had been groping eagerly for a lost treasure, and suddenly found it:

"If Salvation is about to come to Israel, it will come as the leaven of the just. Regeneration cannot be wrought but by the souls' turning singly toward God. The new Prophet is gathering the humble and the poor about himself. He

¹ Ps. 109.

² Isaiah, 9, 6.

³ Isaiah, 9, 6-7.

will mold them in his hands, and prepare them for the Kingdom. They will sow with him, and reap alone. They shall gather the people, and establish order among the multitudes, and lead them away from the Scribes and Pharisees, and shall make them the elect¹ of God. The people of God are a holy people. There is neither master nor serf, neither Pharisee nor Sadducee, neither prince nor subject before the Lord our God; for the ‘Lord loveth the gates of Sion above all the tabernacles of Jacob,’² and the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.’³ Behold,” he concluded, “the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the just runneth to it, and shall be exalted,”⁴ and pointing with his outstretched right arm toward the East, he cried out, raising himself in the saddle:

“Behold a man, the Rising is his name: and under Him he shall grow up and shall build a temple to the Lord,⁵ His priestly Kingdom and a holy nation!”⁶

Rapha’s words flowed rapidly and energetically, as the stream tumbling from the hills.

When he had finished, his face was flushed and his eyes sparkled, and his nostrils were distended with the exaltation that moved his soul. He had stopped his horse, and Miriam involuntarily imitated him. Thamar was as deeply moved as Rapha himself. Miriam was too much astonished at such enthusiasm of her ordinarily cool and deliberate servant, to comprehend him instantly. After a short pause of solemn silence, during which no one moved, Rapha said to Miriam apologetically:

“I trow, my gracious mistress think me not bold, that I should so forget myself in her presence.”

But Miriam replied, full of wonder:

¹ Isaiah, 5, 2; 7, 15; Jerem. 2, 21.

² Ps. 26, 2.

³ Isaiah, 2, 11.

⁴ Prov. 18, 10.

⁵ Zach. 6, 12.

⁶ Exod. 19, 6.

"If he be the Prophet, why hath he not called thee to follow after him, and left Judas?"

And when Rapha would say something in recognition of the compliment implied, she bade him be silent with a wave of the hand, and they entered the great court of the palace together, a small group of travelers, more tried by this pleasure jaunt than oft before by far more extensive journeys; they had looked a thousand years into the past, and had discovered therein the blushing dawn of a new era; they had seen the "Ensign of the people." But Miriam's esteem of the new Prophet, so promisingly aroused by the manifestation of his authority and greatness, had been wrecked by its clashing with a sentiment not indeed quite new to her, but for its timeliness, fervently cherished, the sentiment of love for Gaddiel. This love was in perfect accord with her character; voracious as her pleasure-loving soul, passionate as her unbridled lustng after diversion well seasoned, and crude as her estimate of the man whom she loved. It was despair that drove her into his arms. Her love was rather surrender than devotion, as the deer, threatened by raging fire ahead, would rather surrender to the arrow of the huntsman in the rear than plunge into a fiery grave. But she felt the madness of the choice between the Prophet of Nazareth and her new acquisition most keenly. She had thought Gaddiel an enamored fop, but when she had taken time to consider his untiring devotion, the sacrifices he made, and the dangers he braved for her sake, she persuaded herself that she loved him, and, whether vanity or gratitude had prompted her to honor him that morning after the eventful night of the fire, now she felt that she craved his company. When she lay down upon her couch that night, she traced his name dotingly on her pillow, and kissed it. But there was neither the sweetness of affection nor the lightness of sincerity in the kiss; only the power of the Prophet's personality, sought for comfort,

had driven her from dallying indolence to the most jealous assertion of her own endangered rights and privileges: Miriam had become a “sinner” by her own deliberate choice, before her own conscience and before her God. Loath to forsake the ways that *he* censured, and to follow those that *he* indicated, she cast herself, desperate with the apprehension of utter unhappiness, into the turbulent and troubled sea of selfishness, that is the grave of honor. In the coldness of her disappointed heart, she found the memory of the previous amours breathe a hundredfold comfort. “Jesus of Nazareth is a fanatic,” she reiterated madly, as often as the thought of his sanctity disturbed the sinful scenes in which she reveled: “his doctrine is the death-knell of happiness and liberty. Away with him—give me Gaddiel, the cup of my joy, and the blossom of my heart!”

Thamar knelt in silent prayer all that night. Rapha saw her on his late round of inspection. He did not disturb her devotion, but stood by in the distance observing her a long time. The longer he watched the lithe figure of the little stranger, the more his own devotion seemed to grow; “but,” as he observed to himself when at last retiring from his post, “I am afraid, my devotion is to thee, little chick, as much as to my Maker.”



CHAPTER VI

AN EVENTFUL JOURNEY

THE magnificent Temple of Jerusalem, which Herod the Great had made the eighth wonder of the world by restoring it on the lines of the ancient Solomonic Temple, and by embellishing it within and ornamenting it without, was the loadstar of all the piety of the Jews. Hither they flocked at least once a year, about the days of the Pasch, not only from the towns and the cities, the mountains and the plains, of their own Land of Promise, but from the corners of the earth, in token of their fidelity to their God-King. No man so poor but would here make his offering, no woman so lowly but would here crave a blessing; no teacher so proud but would listen to the teachers of the Temple; no ruler so haughty but would do honor to its priests.

This year the Temple held out a singular attraction in the expectation that Jesus of Nazareth, the new Prophet, whose name was in the mouth of all from Gazor to Engaddi, from Bashan to Sharon, the length and breadth of the country, would also come up and reveal himself: for he had given proof of being an extraordinary man. He had so far spoken little in public, or, as it were, had spoken only incidentally; but the little that he had said was scented with the fragrance of the glorious past. The perfume of the prophetic psalms of David, and of the witching Messianic promises of Isaiah, had made his hearers drunk with the sweetness of ancient hopes reviving and had comforted their hearts with fresh confidence in the good-will of Jahveh, their God. His words were redolent with the spicy odor of the fresh-blown

lilies of the valleys, of which Solomon had sung in rapturous strain a thousand years before, and of the roses of Jericho blooming in prodigal abundance. And the deeds which he had done at Cana and at Bethsaida were worthy of comparison, which they made, with the works of the greatest of the Men of God, of Moses, Elijah and Elisha. Everywhere on the highways, as the pilgrims hurried along in troops and groups, his words and deeds were made the theme of reverent and elated discussion, and were earnestly detailed to the arrivals from the exterior world. The conviction that he was the "One that was to be sent,"¹ was well-nigh universal.

The Pharisees indeed held aloof from the crowd from sheer contempt; the Sadducees, from fear of provoking the ready ridicule of massed idlers; the Zealots came straggling, singly, or in pairs, but within a zone of easy communication with their fellows: they feared the hand of Rome which had cast them forth. The antiquated remnants of the Chasidim were lining the roads, drear and silent, like so many decaying trees.

These four sects set themselves apart from the quickening stream of enthusiasm welling forth anew from the throbbing heart of the nation. They were not, and would not be, in accord with the multitude hungering after the comforts and consolations of religion. They were wrapped up in the mists and clouds of their own expectations, or conceits. Their own several objects and ambitions were alone worthy of their own and God's attention.

The Pharisee with haughty breast; the Sadducee with wicked tongue; the Zealot with savage heart and blood-stained hand; the Chasidim with moldering soul: what sense or need had they of the graceful benediction poured out from heaven upon the awakened Daughter of Sion, like the ointment of the bride! "His left hand was under her

¹ Genes. 49, 10 and 26.

head, and his right hand was about to embrace her;”¹ but what was it to them that the populace courted shadows and luring phantoms!

The ones had constituted themselves the heartless custodians of the rigorous Law, the others had set aside Law and Prophets; the Zealots were covetous of plunder and power; and the Chasidim, content to hunt their own grim fancies in solitude and silence. The pulsing life of the people who make the nation was to them all vanity and superstition.

Among the festive throngs coming up from the region of the Lake of Gennesar one group in particular attracted general attention, both because of the air of cheerfulness which surrounded them, and because of the splendor and taste of their raiment. Many a courtly acknowledgment was bowed towards them by the passers-by. The younger men would even rein in their mules and linger a little while in the gay company. And the compliment was richly deserved.

Miriam appeared as winningly pretty as a fresh blossom. She was attired after the fashion of her people, but in the costliest stuffs that Tyre and Sidon could furnish to wealth and tasteful luxury. And her face bloomed with the soft hues of the pomegranate, white as milk, and suffused with the delicate tint of the rosy blush of youth. Her profuse brown hair was only half covered with her white veil, and the wind frisked with the stray wisps and tufts which were blown from under the light covering about her neck and shoulders. The joy of the journey was in her eyes, the tinkle of merriment in her voice, and the pride of the lavish tribute paid to her beauty, in her pose and manner. Small wonder that she charmed the gallant swains!

Rapha sat erect, with festive mien. He was arrayed, as beffited his importance, in the garments of a man of sub-

¹ Cant. of Canticles, 2, 6.

stance and estate. The rays of the sun of admiration fondling his lofty mistress were reflected on him, and it made him dizzy with pride to know that he was the governor and protector of the most coveted woman on the pilgrimage.

Hannah did not ride near enough to her mistress to invite comparison; but yet she also wore the festive air with maidenly grace. Thamar, who had clung to the silent Omer all the way, had the cheer of the journey and the joy of the feast twinkling in her eyes. Gentile that she was, she could not enter the House of God, but she could and would see Jesus, the Master, whom she loved so dearly. She had chosen the silent companion because she was too busy with her own heart to require diversion, and her musings were too sacred and tender to bear inspection.

The other members of the group, neighbors, servants, and attendants of the princess, vied with each other in showing their respect and devotion to their mistress, and in paying loving attentions to each other. They also were distinguished from all the other pilgrims as much by the cheerfulness of their manner as by the pomp of their costume.

At several stages of the long journey Rapha had made advances toward the young stranger Thamar to engage her in conversation, but in vain. His efforts to draw her away from the living Sphinx were futile. His motives were not the most unselfish, assuredly, for Rapha was a practical man. He had often observed her in the house of Miriam, at work and at leisure, since he had stood on guard over her prayers in that night of her silent thanksgiving for having been rescued from death and Judas by him. She had certainly made a memento for her physician and deliverer. She had, in the course of a few weeks, become so dear to him that he had repeatedly instituted comparisons between his "fair one" and the beautiful mistress without having hurt his sentiment. In his eyes the poor little Gentile was perfect. She was pious, as every woman ought to be; she

was gentle and timid, with so much ingenuousness that she much reminded him of the lambs which he had often borne in his arms and sheltered in his coat. She was confiding without guile, an indication of her purity of heart; she was graceful withal, slender and lithesome, a child despite her maidenhood.

He could not long disguise his sweet admiration before the eyes of the maiden so tenderly loved. Thamar had heard the note of affection through his morning salutation, through his approval of her diligence, through his casual but pointed allusions to the great new Prophet. She saw the light of fondness in his eyes, the smile of happiness on his lips.

At first she pondered, and did not respond. She appreciated the honor of being wooed by the governor of the palace and estate of Magedan. But she had never thought of reciprocating courtesies, except as such; her affections were so intimately bound up with the ideal of her soul, the Prophet of Nazareth, that weeks passed ere she could clearly discern between the love which she bore the Prophet and that which she owed the devoted wooer. She was filled with anxiety, and would prefer flight or hiding to the company of the smitten governor. She had always looked up to Rapha with filial reverence, and often conversed with herself on the honesty and piety of the new overseer. She had often in secret admired the strength of his arm, the power of his shoulders, the symmetry of his figure, and thus had come to love him before she knew that she had fixed her affection. She had never forgotten that morning when he had borne her on his arms into the house, to save her, although she was already half dead. But she was ignorant of the law which forbade him to make her, a stranger to the chosen people of God, his wife.

Miriam also had noticed the tender ties weaving between the new governor and her pet. On the way to the feast she

had twitted him with his bashfulness, inasmuch as "it must be easy for a Samson to carry off the neat Delila." But Rapha answered with a remonstrance against the legal prohibition: "I hope that I shall encounter as little opposition as that Tower of strength, who also sought him a wife among the strangers. Boaz married Ruth, a daughter of Moab," he argued earnestly, expecting to enlist the cunning of his mistress in his cause. But she advised him, with some sarcasm in her tone, to seek the counsel of the new Prophet.

"He does not seem to take kindly to the statutes with which the lawyers have hedged the law of Moses," she replied; "if I mistake not, he must take a decided stand against their position, as soon as the Scribes and Pharisees take cognizance of his existence. His love for the down-trodden will not permit them to interpret and apply the law with their accustomed stupid rigor. Would to God," she exclaimed with a little selfishness, "he could rid us of the Thora¹ and its grim watch dogs!"

Rapha knew that his mistress was a rebel at heart, and he was much inclined to approve her rebellion. But although far from praising the unreasonable punctiliose ness of the Scribes and Pharisees, yet he was a pious Jew, who did not think of rejecting the traditional interpretation for fear of offending against the substance of the Law. He would bide his time, and trust in God before whose sight his heart was pure, and his love sacred.

As they neared Bethania Miriam arranged her garments with utmost nicety, and discarding her habitual rakishness of pose sat up as demurely as any damsel in the pious procession. The roads were steadily becoming more crowded, the conversation more subdued, the pace slower, and the faces of the pilgrims more solemn.

There on Moriah's lofty crest gleamed and beamed the

¹ The rigorous law in vogue over the law of God.

House of God in the golden flood of the morning light, a massive, imposing structure of white stone, resting, as it appeared, on a large square of gigantic white columns,¹ and crowned with a golden dome. The play of sunlight and shadow in the colonnades made the pillars appear, at a distance, to file about the Temple in solemn, silent procession.

The sight of this superb emblem of their princely rank among the nations of the earth, and of the favor of their God-King, made the hearts of the pilgrims beat higher with pride, and their eyes sparkle with delight. This was the impregnable citadel of their God, the pledge of their sovereignty over the whole world, the seal of their eternal covenant with Heaven. Even the beasts seemed to move with festive tread, as if they participated in the sacred fervor of their riders.

But Miriam had not ordered her apparel on the inspiration of religious reverence. Bethania was her birthplace; many of its inhabitants must still remember the vivacious but virtuous little sister of Martha and Eleazar of the house of Simonides, and her brother and sister were surely awaiting her arrival. She would give the lie to the slanderers and scoundrel-mongers, who had borne her unsavory reputation into her father's house, and had prejudiced not only the rustic community, but also her pious sister and her learned brother against her. When, therefore, they came upon the party of Eleazar, as they had expected, awaiting them at the gate of their superb mansion, Miriam alighted with the grace of a queen, and embraced her sister. Martha returned the sisterly caress most heartily, and complimented "her little foreigner" on her fine appearance. But Eleazar was less effusive in manifesting his pleasure at the meeting. He tolerated her embrace and kiss, but sniffed ungraciously at the rich odor of her ointments, and said sadly:

¹There were 162 columns, each 27 cubits high, and 5 feet in diameter. Jewish Antiqu. 15, 11, 5.

"Miriam, Miriam, good sister mine! Why hast thou forsaken the traditions of thy father's house!" And putting his lips close to her ear, he scandalized her with the earnest entreaty: "Return, return, ere thou be lost!"

She feigned ignorance of the justice of his reproach, and turned from him to her sister with very plain signs of being annoyed and piqued. Martha was all joy and affection; not a sign of displeasure, not a word of reproach! Miriam loved her sister passionately, and Martha's noble reserve and forbearance made her ashamed of her accustomed associations and diversions. Nay, Martha shall never learn that she dallied with the son of the Pharisee; she would rather tear him out of her heart; for he was not so deeply rooted!

After this brief exchange of the first greetings they remounted, and proceeded with the constantly flowing stream of pilgrims on the journey across the rugged plain between Bethania and the Mount of Olives.

Martha's appearance proclaimed her a womanly maiden. She was so plain and modest in manner and attire, so reserved and quiet, that she would never have attracted attention in a group. Still there was security in her eyes, and energy and precision in her movements. To her dashing sister she compared in nothing except in gracefulness of figure. Miriam's face was ever bright with the cheerfulness of the blue sky; Martha's was calm and tender, as the violet in the hedge. Miriam's face would remind one, on comparing it with that of Martha, of a pretty trinket, made of gold and set with precious stones, ornamental, in truth, but, for its gaiety, a mere toy; whereas Martha's was a gold coin as valuable as a jeweled trifle, and more useful, even if less pretty.

Eleazar was severe with the severity of a recluse. "Touch me not" was stamped upon his whole appearance. But it was the shrinking of purity that bears not defilement, not

the tenderness of pride that stoops not to be kind. The atmosphere of Judea in those days was so strong that it would breed either saints or sinners, men or mites, according as the material would either unflinchingly oppose, or resign itself without struggle, to the prevailing evil influences.

When they reached the height of Mount Olivet the city with its triple belt of walls and trenches, its rock-built fortress, its majestic Temple, its stately palaces, perched on five hills, burst upon their view like an enchanted region. Its streets and open places were already filled with thousands upon thousands of pilgrims who had come from strange lands, and had brought bits of color and costume from their distant homes. And the goal of all their game and gaiety was the House of God. It was a magnificent spectacle, a review of the world in miniature. The Jew had garnered all the good things of the earth; every larger city was his home, and the treasures of the cities, his spoils; and here in the residence of the Daughter of Sion he made lavish and loud display of the fruits of his labors and longings.

But the beauty of Jerusalem had little interest for him who had seen the great cities of the Gentiles with their vast and splendid piles, their wide streets, parks and gardens, monuments, arches, towers and walls built to bid defiance to the march of the centuries, and to tell to posterity the legend of the fame and fail of mighty nations. Miriam's national pride was not so blind, and her religious reverence not so meek, as to allow exuberance of devotion toward the cramped old city and its patched and reconstructed relics of the monuments of its blood-stained past. With a reverent glance at the new Temple and a look of contempt at the palace of the King who built that Temple, tyrant, murderer, and pagan though he was, she turned her eyes upon her nearest surroundings. The living, seething, struggling stream of humanity, in the midst of which she was borne

forward, asked of her more sympathy than the moldering monuments of those who had passed away into the darkness of eternity these many hundred years. She discovered many faces which she had known in her childhood, faces which should reflect a recognition and a welcome; for surely some of them at least had changed more than her own. But the more close and sympathetic her scrutiny, the farther they appeared to retreat before her gaze. It was a cruel experience: her Galilean reputation must have followed her into Judea, and must be overshadowing her with black wings, to turn away from her the friends of her girlhood with a sneer and a frown. She was discouraged, and looked over the haughty heads for an acquaintance from her own domain, where there was perhaps rarer “piety” because there was larger charity.

In her distress she saw Jesus of Nazareth sitting at the side of the road among a handful of his Galilean followers. Judas of Kerioth was with them. She blushed deep, and became embarrassed, more at the cynical and impudent look with which Judas surveyed her, than at the presence of the dreaded censor of her life. They must have awaited them, for they arose, and bestriding their beasts, joined their party. Jesus selected Eleazar for his companion; the others fell in here and there in their rear, but the man of Kerioth joined himself to Martha who was riding with Miriam on the edge of the road. Thamar, who had just come up to them, was visibly startled at the curious combination.

Judas was a glib-tongued talker, and made good use of his talent. After the customary preliminaries of an exchange of salutations and good wishes, he soon had Martha so deeply interested in the subject of the day, the works and teachings of the new Prophet, that he led her away unawares from Miriam. He added considerably to what was true from “his personal experience!”

Miriam was on fire. Judas might in his “accidental method” mention Gaddiel and herself together, “without intending to hurt anyone.” She despatched Thamar to follow Martha, and stay at her side to fend the dreaded blow at her reputation with her noble sister. Thamar winced, but obeyed.

When she joined Martha, Judas leered at her with exasperating impudence and familiarity. The memory of the unpardonable insult which he had offered her in the park of her mistress in the night of the fire flashed up in an instant, and confused her mind. She turned the head of her mule, and crossing Judas’s tracks, she pressed her mount against his, and struck him a resounding blow in the face with her open hand. “Thief,” she hissed into his ear; “fie, that thou shouldst live!”

But the revulsion of her emotion set in as abruptly as its outbreak had come upon her. She asked pardon of Martha for her rudeness and want of self-control; “but,” she continued with some vehemence, “he is a thief and a Pharisee, and hath a wicked tongue.”

Judas had instantly dropped behind and joined the disciples; Thamar was acquainted with too many of his misdeeds to tolerate contradiction or correction. But she had spoken loud, in the manner of children under strong emotion; and the opprobrious “Pharisee” had fallen on tender ears. A man of distinguished appearance immediately shouted at her to stop: “Daughter of Israel,” he snarled at her with a severity so cold as to unnerve the frightened child; “daughter of Israel, darest thou to name the princes of the Nation with thieves! Thou shalt not enter the House of the Lord, and I shall command that thou be flogged at the inn!”

Martha halted at the heartless threat; and fixing her blazing eyes on the Pharisee replied angrily: “Who art thou that wouldest lay stripes on a maiden! Hide thy face for

shame, and remember the sorrows of thy mother! And this maid is not a daughter of Israel, but a stranger in the land; her speech is but the echo of report."

Thamar crouched on the saddle and was almost unconscious from terror. But Martha soothingly laid a hand on her shoulder, and bade her not be afraid; "for there is justice in Israel," she said with a withering look at Simon Bar Jehu, the haughty.

Miriam had observed the little group very attentively, and no sooner noticed the altercation than she hastened to the scene to lend a hand. She had not understood the words that had passed, but she gathered the result of the encounter from the swelling neck of the Pharisee, her neighbor in Gennesar, and from the angry face of her quiet sister, and the humble position of her pet.

"Simon," she said, turning upon him with imperious grace, "Simon, this child is my handmaid. Do not, I pray, molest her. I should resent it very much. How may a neighbor so far forget the civilities of the festive roads as to brawl with women!" And she laughed at him, and snapped her fingers in his face.

"The impudent wench!" Simon muttered in his beard. He had not enough courage to attack the ready champion of the weak, nor enough self-control to stay himself in a defense against the sallies of the wily "Sinner," and withdrew like an evening shower, growling and threatening a disastrous return. Miriam had heard him grumble, and suspected that he was thinking evil of her; but wishing to close the incident as speedily as possible, she turned towards her pet with sweet words of comfort and encouragement.

They were now descending into the narrow valley, and moving with growing difficulty towards the northeastern gates of the city. The flare of the silver trumpets resounded from the steps of the Great Court, announcing the preparation of the morning sacrifices, and the crowds moved faster,

like the waters of a river rising in the broad bed to hurl themselves and rush headlong through the gorge. A great sigh of relief ever announced the safe passing of a fresh throng on the other side of the gates, where the street branched out in many directions, which again converged toward the foot of Mount Moriah.

Not far from the temple mount Eleazar had engaged lodgings for the feast days. There was room for both his and Miriam's company. Arriving at their quarters they threw the reins to the servants of the inn, who were awaiting their coming by the previous thoughtful arrangement of Eleazar, in order to stable the beasts, so that they themselves might not be unnecessarily detained.

Simon Bar Jehu, the sensitive Pharisee, had asked shelter at the same inn, but had been disappointed by the anticipation of the rabbi of Bethania. But for this reason he knew the quarters at which he had threatened to have Thamar flogged. He was now passing them, singling out the intended victim of his revenge with a vicious look. But he was carried forward by the unwieldy masses.

When Miriam saw him riding by with his ferocious scowl, she knew that he had not forgiven; she, therefore, took Rapha aside and acquainted him with the unpleasant incident of the last league of the journey. "Stay with her," she charged him, "and have a care that the child may not be humbled and hurt; I lay this care upon thy head!"

"Lay it upon my heart!" he replied fiercely: "may the ravens pluck out my eyes, and may the adders eat my heart, if aught befall thy pet by the hand of Simon! Go and pray; I will remain with her."

"She is protected as by a wall of living rock," Miriam said to Martha who had manifested some concern about the cruel threat of the Pharisee. Then they again plunged into the stream of the pilgrims.

But the progress became slower and ever slower the

nearer they approached the large outer courts, until at last it came to a complete standstill.

"The halls are crowded with cattle and money changers," was the unkind but accurate explanation passed over the heads of the impatient throng. Complaints were uttered with little reverence, and the more sturdily pious Galileans made threats and very uncomplimentary remarks about the greed of the priests and elders, who profited by the profanation, letting the courts to the dealers for rent. The Galileans at all events had an old grudge against the officials of the Temple, because they had forbidden the importation of the delicious fruits of Gennesar into the city for the duration of the several feasts, "lest men should be attracted to the city less by religious motives than by the hope of eating them."¹

After a spell of grumbling, however, the masses quieted down, joining in spirit in the prayers and chantings of their more fortunate brethren, who had gained admittance to the heart of the festivities. And as universal silence fell upon the throngs, the Temple heaved and breathed with the rhythm of song and music. The plaintive notes of the ugab,² the jubilant crash of the tzetzelim,³ the mellow hum of the kinnor⁴ and nebel,⁵ vied with the brag and blare of the shophar⁶ and the purr and tinkle of the toph⁷ in arduous contest to swell the burst of exultation pouring forth from prayerful souls. But in the measured pauses the lowing of a heifer, the bleating of a sheep, or the wrangling of a dishonest banker would be heard above the solemn chant rendering the solemnity extremely ridiculous. A long-drawn, animated and disgruntled "baa" in the midst of a canticle of praise was not calculated to sustain devotion and solemnity. Here and there an unripe boy laughed and

¹ Judea from Cyrus to Titus, page 254.

² A simple pipe-organ.

³ Cymbals.

⁷ Tambourine

⁴ Lyre and small harp.

⁵ Harp.

⁶ Trumpet

repeated the unholy sounds; the reproof of his elders soon changed to scolding disgust, and at last stopped altogether from sheer vexation. The scene gradually turned into a living blasphemy. Some of the pilgrims began to withdraw with frowning and discouraged countenance; the tension of the crowds relaxed, but the noise inside the halls increased.

Suddenly there was a shout and violent commotion in the Hall of Solomon, where the bartering had been going on. Sheep and cattle were seen running away without aim, fleeing in all directions with their shrieking owners in pursuit. The dealers in pigeons and sparrows came scampering down the stone steps with their cages,¹ scared and excited, and the chink and clink of coins rolling over the pavement, and the crash of tables overturned, resounded throughout the sacred edifice. As if lightning had struck in their midst and a hurricane had blown them away, the irreverent tenants of the "first temple" had disappeared. But in the center of the Beautiful Porch thus cleared stood a man with flaming countenance, flashes of anger darting from his eyes. His threateningly uplifted right hand grasped a scourge of ropes, while his left pointed the way of the desecrators out of the Holy House, his resonant and angry voice striking awe and terror into the hearts of the most reluctant of the offenders:

"Take these things hence, and make not the house of my Father a house of traffic!"²

His appearance was majestic. He stood alone in the face of thousands who considered themselves injured by his audacity, and by the mere power of his personality kept the instantly rising opposition and resentment of the overseers at bay. Only after the shock of amazement had given way to the feeling of injury to their authority, they drew near, cautiously, and demanded of him by what authority he did these things.

¹ John, 2, 16.

² John, 2, 19.

"Show us a sign," they urged, "that we may know thou hast authority to act in this manner!"

But he laid his hand upon his breast and answered them: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

And they reviled him, and jeered and boasted: "Forty-six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days?" And they left him in the hands of the pious multitude who were now fast pouring into the hall. The discouraged worshipers returned, like diverted waters after the opening of a sluice-gate, and flocked and pressed around him, loudly extolling his courage, and praising his zeal for the house of God. Some touched the hem of his garments, others kissed his hands, with the utmost reverence and with blissful elation, and many, less fearful than others of the scowls of the Scribes and Pharisees now mixing among the people, professed exultingly that "it was he of whom it had been foretold, 'The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.'"

The impressions which the wonderful courage of the Man of Nazareth had produced on the people at large were varied, and not at all adequate to the magnitude of his deed. He had cleared the Temple single-handed, he had driven out hundreds of sordid and greedy merchants, and had broken up their traffic by the majesty of his appearance rather than with the lashes of his whip. He had frightened away the officials, who had been the promoters and protectors of this profanation. It must remind them of the zeal of the old prophets, who had taken the words of the Messiah in their own mouths when they proclaimed: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth."¹

And yet the leaders asked him to prove the legitimacy of his claim to such marvelous power by working another sign before their eyes! The venders returned, the rabble

¹ Ps. 26, 8.

cheered, only a few were thoughtful enough to draw the irresistible conclusion: "This Man is of God."

But considering the antique obstinacy of that race, it was not surprising. Had they not, involved in political and religious wrangles, distracted with ambition and avarice, forgotten also the strange spectacle of the Magi of Aram, of the Land of Balaam, seeking the new-born King of the Jews? They or their fathers had showed them the way to his cradle at Bethlehem, taking the Prophet Micah for their guide, but had themselves remained at home, because they dreaded the cruelty of a king whom Rome had imposed on them! Had they not likewise forgotten the prophecy of Simeon the Just at the presentation of that wonder-child of Bethlehem? Some of the priests and levites now serving at the altar had heard the exultation of the heart of Simeon, when he held "the Light for the illumination of the Gentiles and the Glory of Israel, the people of God" to his transported breast, but they had forgotten Simeon and the infant Savior together!

Many of the doctors now upbraiding him with his "audacity" could recall his appearance among them, as a twelve-year-old boy at whose questions and answers they were astounded for the wisdom and grace of his disputation. But when even the miracle of Cana, the great deeds of Caper-naum, his heavenly doctrine of penance and peace, were laid aside for later and leisurely examination, it was indeed not surprising that the cleansing of the Temple should not be esteemed more highly than the miraculous manifestations in the lives of the greatest prophets of antiquity. It was a thoughtless, worldly generation. They had long secularized their hopes of redemption, and had exalted themselves above the decrees of the Lord.

It was not fallow ground that the Messiah was come to till, but ground overgrown with poisonous weeds and parched with the drought of purely earthly aspirations. Verily the

Prophet had come to a vineyard “planted a chosen vineyard, all true seed: but which was turned into that which is good for nothing, a strange vineyard,”¹ “And he did not trust himself to them,” because he knew them.²

Miriam also had fortified herself against the effect of the wonderful deed, and although even she, as many of those who had come up from Galilee and from the region beyond the Jordan, heartily applauded the cleansing as most opportune in view of the great crowds who were debarred from the worship by the sacrilegious obstruction, yet the response of her generous heart did not rise to the height of religious veneration, nor even of candid admiration. She was frightened at the prospect of being obliged to forsake her evil ways, the abhorrence of which began slowly to insinuate itself into her reluctant heart, if she would acknowledge in him a Messenger of God.

She delighted in making Gaddiel the toy of her levity, it is true; but her unwillingness to give ear to the Master’s voice reechoing within her: “Follow me!” proceeded rather from her attachment to accustomed dissipation than from her love of the infatuated, silly son of the Pharisee. She despised both the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the pomposness of the Sadducees; and the artificial piety of her Judean countrymen filled her soul with abomination. These people who applauded every mountebank, assisted in secret every disturber of the public peace; who bowed their faces in the dust in reverence of the insolence that oppressed them, and again spat in the face of every man who stood head and shoulder above them: these people, who at the same time clung with the tenacity of idiocy to the antiquated manners and customs of their forbears in bondage and exile, could not win her proud soul to sympathy and respect. They paid a grudging tribute to Cæsar, and whined at Cæsar’s throne; they made their offerings

¹ Jerem. 2, 21.

² John, 2, 24.

in the Temple in "holy money," and boasted that they had no King but Jahveh, the Most High, but accepted their high priest from the unclean hands of a petty Roman procurator. And their priests paid their way to the holy office with the sums wrested from these people!

Why, she argued, should she not have broken away from such mean and cowardly duplicity, and not have emancipated herself from the prejudices of those who, in her opinion, still "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death!" If the Prophet of Nazareth could free the nation from the intolerable trammels of the multitudinous legal precepts and prohibitions which rendered life almost unendurable; if he could dissipate the clouds of ignorance of the prerogatives of liberty-endowed and liberty-loving man, then she would follow him with enthusiasm. But until then she would stand apart both from him and from her people, and meanwhile regulate her mode of living according to her own conceptions of right and duty.

The position which she had assumed against the Prophet was not only perilous and dishonorable, but also dishonest. She would test his superiority by the efficiency of his mere word — for he wielded no visible authority—against evils which had withstood the circumspection, diplomacy, and determination of an Ezra and a Nehemiah. She set him up in comparison with the Pharisees, the idols of the pious as well as of the ignorant, because the Pharisees hated the foreign domination; and with the rabble, whom she herself despised for their stupid inconsistency and foolish inconstancy. It did not cross her mind that the Prophet could not even find an audience for his plans of reform, if everyone would resolve, as she had resolved, to be a purblind witness to his deeds and a listless hearer of his teaching.

Thus she had entered into the Hall of Solomon fully in sympathy with the crowds, first wildly shouting his praise, and afterwards asking his credentials, when the magnitude

of his deed dawned upon them, when they suspected him of being the Messenger of the Covenant, the Anointed of the Lord of whom Haggai had prophesied: "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."¹ Her brother, who had remained at her side, had reminded her of the prophecy, and had quoted the text, adding reflectively: "And we have beheld his glory, the glory of the Savior full of grace and truth." But Miriam was deaf to the "frenzied declamations" of the young rabbi, and was not kind enough to conceal her distaste of his enthusiasm.

¹ Hag. 2, 9.



CHAPTER VII

DISGRACE

MIRIAM returned to the inn hungry, thirsty, and tired. She reclined on a couch, and set all her servants in motion to wait upon her needs. But when she had tasted of the food which was not prepared to her liking, she bade Hannah prepare a bath for her, and repaired to the bath-room. While she was engaged with the bath she heard Thamar utter a piercing cry. Instantly remembering the savage threat of Simon, she sprang from the room, wrapping her coat about herself as best she could in her excitement as she ran out. She was not too well covered, and her face was flushed with rage.

The scene which met her eyes appalled her. The Prophet of Nazareth was standing in the middle of the street extending one hand in protection over the head of Thamar, while in the other he clutched a short, stout leather thong, which he had evidently wrested from the grasp of Simon, who sat bolt upright on his mule, a much bewildered man. The right shoulder of the child was bared, the robe having been dragged down by the blow, the heavy, purplish welt of which extended across the back. She was grieved to the quick, and sobbed disconsolately. Even the presence of "her" Prophet did not seem to hold out a comfort to her at this dread hour.

Simon's momentary discomfiture, however, soon turned into contempt. As he recovered his judgment he leaned over toward the Prophet, leering at him with the impudence of a rustic hostler, in the act of snatching the whip from his hand; but at the same instant Rapha came bounding like

a tiger from the court, and apprehending the meaning of the scene at sight, threw himself upon the rider, dislodged him, and pitched him headlong into the street. Now he stood over him and belabored him with a pale which he had plucked out of the hedge of the garden in front of the hostelry. The Prophet threw the whip over the hedge, and touched Rapha's shoulder signifying to him to stop, and handed Thamar over to him. Then he departed with his disciples, one of whom, Simon Bar Jonah, had just rolled up his coat and disengaged his right arm in order to assist Rapha, when the Master forbade the continuance of the punishment.

It had all happened in the twinkling of an eye. Nobody seemed to have taken notice of the unpresentable Miriam, until Simon was assisted to his feet by his servants, whom he had left behind in the eagerness of his desire for revenge. He looked around with bloodshot eyes for his assailant, or for his victim, and discovering Miriam standing in the door with her bare arm raised against him, he cried at the top of his voice:

“Behold the Harlot of Gan-Sar!”¹ And he clenched his fists and extended them towards her with an imprecation too wicked to record.

All eyes were turned in her direction, but she hung her head, and slunk into the house. The recklessness of her attire, of which she had been made aware so painfully, must lend color to the title of disgrace which the Pharisee had applied to her. He had used the archaic form, too, of the name of her estate,¹ which, for its tacit reference to the dissolute princes and princelings of the Galilean cities, carried the insinuation of meretricious intercourse with the “foreign pest.” No imputation could be more galling to a Jewish maiden. Simon had aimed well, and had shot his shaft straight through her heart.

¹ Gan-Sar, the root of the Gennesar of Josephus Flavius, and of the Gensaret of the Evangelists. It means “the Prince's Garden.”

Miriam was hurt beyond balm. None had so far dared or thought to impugn her maidenly honor in public, and in the hearing of her household. The reflection was odious beyond endurance. Her conduct in public had been characterized by levity, generally, and had often narrowly escaped the verge of recklessness, but her indulgence had been kindly put to the account of her associations, and her boldness to that of her youth, wealth, and beauty. But what added bitterness to the injury inflicted upon her was the relentless clamoring of her heart, that even the father of him on whom she had so lately lavished her favors should humble her with the imputation of a disgrace which she had warded off in frequent and violent contentions with his own son!

Oh, but she would be revenged! By the bones of her fathers, she would prepare a surprise for the old hypocrite, that should make his hair turn gray in the passing of a Sabbath; that should embitter every sentiment of his proud soul, and batter into the dust the tower of the strength of his house! She had been gay and frivolous; but she was no man's courtesan! "And if I must ruin the son to be revenged against the sire!" she exclaimed, raving like a maniac. She reeled with the vehemence of her fury; she stretched her body with such intolerance of the insult that the sinews and muscles stiffened and appeared to be about to snap; and her lips reeked with horrible malediction. The remorse for her dalliance with the giddy youth was consuming her; yet she did not repent: that she should at all have acknowledged his flatteries, not from love, but from fear of the Prophet who had called her unto himself, was a rebuke so sharp as to penetrate to the core of her heart. She had forfeited the right of defense against the only disgrace which she had dreaded as long as she had known the danger of incurring it, and had forfeited it to an unripe boy, a Pharisee, and for the liberation from the call of the

Man of Nazareth! Her hatred of Gaddiel was deadly. But she would also curse the Prophet, if she only dared to take his name upon her lips! And he had been kind to the poor child. "Miriam," she cried aloud, "Miriam, have courage; thou shalt see the day of thy revenge!"

The pure and gentle face of the Prophet, as she remembered it from his sermon to the multitude at the lake-shore, appeared in the midst of her ravings like the sun in the midst of a shower, as a signal of quiet, comfort, and peace. Her fury was changed into unspeakable bitterness. What must he have thought of her, when he saw her standing only half covered in the door of the inn? What, when he heard the reproach of the Pharisee? She would follow him, just to gainsay the disgrace, if he would smite the Pharisee with the anger which had fired him in the Court of Solomon! But he had struck no blows with his scourge of cords; he would not become partner to her schemes of revenge. She must dismiss the thought of his assistance; his anger is not the anger of the mighty. It fades away when it has achieved its purpose. She must make her plans alone.

But where was Gaddiel these days? He was not seen in the company of his father; but he is surely come up to the feast. "What is it to me where he may be lurking and nosing?" she fumed; "it is to be expected that he will avoid me when his father is about. Let him beguile his leisure with sweet follies: there are many giddy maidens among the pilgrims; I will dally with him no more. But I will conceal my change of heart; I need him for a tool to dig his father's grave. What care I if I break his heart!" she concluded, and tossed the hair out of her face with a petulant shake of the head. Then she arrayed herself in her finest and best in defiance of the squeamishness of the scandalized Judean hostler and his envious daughters, and gave orders to make ready for immediate departure. Eleazar and her sister protested, but she was obdurate; Rapha and Omer scowled,

but she persisted; Hannah and the other maids pleaded, but she promised that she would requite them for the small sacrifice of losing the pageant of the next day, the Great Sabbath, and repeated her order.

An hour later her entire company were mounted, and came filing out through the large gate where she was awaiting them. "Forward!" she commanded, and bade a common cool farewell to her brother and sister and their company.

As they rode out she headed the gloomy cavalcade, proud as ever, and more defiant than Simon, the Pharisee, who stood at a respectful distance and made faces, perhaps at her or Rapha, but perhaps even at the beating which had certainly left some busy reminders of Rapha's energy on his back. Rapha rode at her right, bearing the thong with which Thamar had been struck, in his hand. When they passed the place where Simon was watching them, Rapha twisted the scourge into a knot and hurled it at the grinning sentinel, striking him in the neck directly below the ear, whereupon Simon speedily deserted his post. At the left of Miriam rode the unfortunate maiden.

The dexterity of Rapha, and at the same time the unseemly hurry of his animated target, had provoked a burst of laughter from the maidens, and had even driven the clouds from the brow of the sullen Omer for an instant; but the gloom of disappointment settled again on all the faces. Yet there was no sign of disaffection such as would seem natural in Jews in view of the terrible reproach cast upon their beloved mistress. They appeared to take it at its real value, as an unwarranted insult offered in requital of Miriam's sally of good-natured impudence on the way hitherward.

On the slope of the Mount of Olives, at a garden called Gethsemane, not far from the walls of the city, they encountered Gaddiel. He was lying prone in the grass, with his face pressed upon his hands, and, to judge from the

twitching of his shoulders, sobbing and weeping. His restive horse was tied to the tree beneath which he had flung himself on his face. At their approach he raised his eyes towards Miriam, but turned them away instantly, with evident signs of bitterness and sorrow. She bade the company ride on, and saluting the prostrate penitent, dismounted.

When Gaddiel heard her spring to the ground he arose quickly and set himself to untie his beast; but she laid her fine, velvety hand upon his and cooed:

“Gaddiel, my love, why wouldst thou hurry away? I have sought thee anxiously at the House of God, and in the market places. Tarry a little; here is a safer place than in the city to keep our tryst. A little aside from the gaping highway; I have a secret for thy ear alone!”

And while she spoke she stroked his hand and face with exceeding tenderness, and drew him away with her. His reluctance yielded slowly but without defense. She led him away by the hand, but he stopped at the fringe of the thicket. She sat down amid the flowers and encouraged him with loving glances to take his place at her side. But her eyes glistened and glowed with the fire of a terrible design. “I will make him insane with love, and then snatch the cup from his lips ere he taste its sweets,” was the legend that her face bespoke.

“Miriam,” he remonstrated as he yielded to the incantation, “I saw the Great Prophet in the Temple, and have resolved to shun the ways of evil. I would dread to fall into his hands, if he should be the Mighty One, who is to be constituted the judge of the world, whose fan is in his hand, who shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire, as John has said of him.¹ I have prayed for strength to the Most High — and I have done with thee!”

The last words he uttered falteringly and hesitatingly, and half in despair.

¹ Matthew, 3, 12.—Mal. 3, 3, and 4, 1.

While he spoke Miriam laid her cheek against his, and remained silent as if through sadness. He began to pity her while he was yet protesting his resolve, and when he perceived the soft glow of her face, and the voluptuous sweetness of her breath, he was transported out of his senses with the violent reawakening of his passion. He grasped her in an impetuous embrace and kissed her passionately. But she freed herself slowly, and rising to her feet pouted and frowned at him.

"Thou hast done with me, Gaddiel," she whimpered with the affectation of injury; "go thy way, Gaddiel; if it be sin to love, then must I also forsake my evil ways. Farewell, Gaddiel; farewell forever!"

The young libertine had fallen out of his heaven. Had he broken his pledge, only given to God that morning, to be cast aside like a broken toy? Nay, he would brave hell and defy Heaven to secure this woman's troth!

She had moved away before he recovered from the shock; but he sprang after her, and grasping her about the waist lifted her off her feet, and cried into her ears:

"Miriam, my dove, my pretty one, my beloved! Do not cast me off! Remain with me; I will flee with thee to Rome, to Antioch, to the ends of the earth, where we shall be free to court and caress and be happy. I will lay my wealth at thy feet, and I pledge thee my life that I will make thee a queen!"

He had reached his horse, and raised her up and seated her in the saddle. Then he severed the halter of the beast with his dirk, and giving Miriam the reins, sprang up behind:

"Whither thou wilt, an it be to Sheol!"

Miriam's own mare, which had not been tied, owing to her tameness and her devotion to her mistress, came scampering along, and put her nose upon Miriam's knee, looking up wistfully into her face. Gaddiel again whipped out his

dirk and plunged it into the mare's chest. The beast instantly sank upon her knees, and then fell over dead. Gaddiel threw the bloody dirk into the thicket, and drove the spurs into the belly of their common mount, starting so suddenly that the woman would have lost her seat, had it not been that he with the quick instincts of a savage braced his chest against her when she bounded up from the saddle, and instantly forced her back upon the seat.

She had made no objection to his passionate protestations of devotion; partly, because her scheme was succeeding so well, and partly also, because the dread that she was in the hands of a madman seized her heart as with the cold grip of death. Gaddiel was no longer the giddy boy of her acquaintance; he had rebelled, and felt the burden of his guilt. He had tempted God, and would flee from Him in the madness of his revolt, because He would not permit him, and Gaddiel would not cease now, to sate his heart to surfeiting with his love.

When he killed her mare, Miriam's heart contracted convulsively with terror and pain. But the sudden start of the horse, and the subsequent furious gallop, prevented her from upbraiding him both for his cruelty and for his arrogance; and when the fear that her master had lost his reason seized her, her courage collapsed completely and she gave herself up to despair.

Once that they had descended the steep paths of the Mount of Olives, the horse struck out for the mountain road of Jericho. Gaddiel guided the beast with his commands. Jericho could be reached in five hours, if he could procure a fresh mount from some straggling thief on the way. That gay city was inhabited by so many Greeks and Romans and lax Jews, that their sojourn of a day or two would not attract attention. Besides this advantage, Jericho presented another, of being the head of the Damascene Road which leads straight through Galilee and Capernaum.

The next day they could not continue in their flight; any Jewish official could stop them for violating the sanctity of the Great Sabbath of the Pasch.

But “Man proposes, and God disposes.” They had not proceeded six miles on the rugged paths of the wooded and rock-strewn range, when Miriam fainted, and falling back limp and lifeless into Gaddiel’s arms, dropped the reins. The horse tripped on them and fell forward, hurling his riders headlong into the shrubbery and wild grass that lined the path. The horse did not rise again; and when Gaddiel examined him, after he had bedded Miriam in the heather, he found, to his terror, that the noble beast had broken the right forefoot, which hung loose by the skin. How bitterly he regretted that he had killed the other beast! But Miriam might have fled from him, if she had had the opportunity, at any unforeseen turn in his arrangements. If he had only preserved the dirk! He could now despatch the crippled animal and free it from its suffering. But he had not trusted himself with that deadly weapon: he might plunge it into her side, if she tried to escape from his hands.

Returning to Miriam he took her up from the ground, and carried her a few hundred paces to a spot down the side of the hill, where the grass was green and luxuriantly dense. He found a spring, as he had expected. He laid her tenderly down, taking her body from the shoulders up in his arms, and poured the cool water over her face with his hand. After a little while she opened her eyes, and looked up at him with speechless terror. He comforted her with an exuberance of fondness and endearment betraying his amorous intoxication, and made a seat for her at the spring, lending his shoulder for the support of her head. He explained his rapidly conceived plan: he would hurry home break open the ample coffers and chests of his father, pack the wealth upon his father’s mules and flee to Tyre, and

thence to Berothai,¹ or to Antioch, and place himself under the protection of the governor of Syria. They could travel most of the way by boat, and would thus easily evade persecution. But there was little danger, as his father would not arrive home before the lapse of two weeks at least, and the overseer of the house would receive a share of the plunder large enough "to silence a busier tongue than his." Would she come with him? But he must procure two horses; she must journey through Samaria, where she would not be molested by the curiosity of the zealous Jews, and could travel weekday and Sabbath day. If she would only remain here for a few hours. He would go to Bethphage, at the foot of Mount Olivet, where he was acquainted with an inn-keeper, from whom he could easily procure the beasts; he would return to her in the dead of night. Would she wait?

Miriam was thoroughly alive again to the difficulties of her situation. It seemed the shortest way out of captivity for her to approve his plan, and consent to wait, albeit she resolved within herself that she would not remain alone half the night in the dark and robber-infested wilderness. "Ay," she replied quietly, "Gaddiel, do as thou hast proposed. Leave me thy cloak that I may cover myself in the cold of the evening. Thou shalt also be safer from detection without it."

He kissed her and departed. It was late in the afternoon; the densely wooded dells were as dark as night. Miriam longed for light and sunshine, and no sooner had her lover departed than she slowly made her way to the crest of the range, and dragged herself along the rough path with difficulty. The fall had loosened every joint in her body. She had landed softly enough not to suffer serious injury; but the mental suffering of that hour in the clutches of a man maddened from passion, and the rude shock of that fall, had made her sore and nervously sensitive. Now she would

¹ Beirut.

not spare him any longer. She would walk back to the highway, and ask a drudging slave for his beast, that she might hasten to rejoin her servants; or, haply Rapha had returned in alarm at her long continued delay, and would rescue her.

Suddenly she heard the scraping of hoofs on the stony path, and all her revengeful courage was instantly scattered to the winds. But she shouted with delight, and burst into tears of joy, when the lone horseman presented himself in the person of the silent Omer. He sprang to the ground at seeing her, and was about to stoop and kiss her hand, when she flung her arms around his neck. He did not know what to say or do, so great was his uncouth embarrassment. She clung to him and sobbed like a child.

Presently Rapha also came upon her. He dismounted cautiously, shaking his head and mumbling his surprise in his beard. He had brought a free mule, that sauntered up leisurely behind his own beast.

When the paroxysm of Miriam's emotions had subsided, Rapha related how they had halted and waited for her; "and when our beloved mistress did not appear as the sun began to shed his beams," he continued, "Omer and I turned back upon our tracks and sought thee at that trysting place on the descent of the hill. There we found thy horse stabbed to death. Surmising evil, I examined the road carefully, and traced the imprints of a heavily burdened beast to the crossroads of Jericho. 'That beast,' I said to Omer, 'carried two,' and followed hither; and behold we have found thee hale and whole! For the which let the name of the God of Israel be blest!"

Omer offered his own beast to her and expectantly laid his hand upon the neck of the free mule. He had taken the saddle from its back, and had strapped it very carefully on the back of his own mount, because this was the fresher and the gentler beast, which he had offered to Miriam. Now

he stood silently awaiting the orders of his mistress. His eyes hung on her lips. He read from the tension of her features that his task was not yet completed.

When Miriam had mounted Omer's mule, she beckoned to him. He crossed over with the alacrity of a hound seeing his master accoutered and ready for the chase. His dark eyes seemed instantly to grow darker still, and his ears were visibly drawn more closely to the head, and lay back with eager expectation of the word which would start him on the scent of his quarry.

Miriam loosened Gaddiel's rich cloak which she had dropped when she embraced the servant, and which he had previously to her mounting placed over the head of the saddle in silent wonder. She held it up before his eyes and asked him:

"Dost recognize this garment?"

"Gaddiel's," he answered briefly.

"It is Gaddiel's," she assented. "Now hear, Omer, what I will thee to do with this cloak: Return to the city, and to-morrow at the hour of the morning sacrifices, when thou shalt find Simon, the chief of the Pharisees of Caper-naum, in the midst of the overseers and the other officials of the Temple, flaunting his holiness in the faces of the Levites and the priests, and his colleagues: then, Omer, when thou hearest him tell of the 'Harlot of Gan-Sar,' go up to him, and spread out this coat on the pavement of the Temple, and ask him it if be not the coat of Gaddiel, his son. And if he say to thee 'ay!' tell him loud: 'The Harlot of Gan-Sar sendeth this to thee in token of her troth with thy son.' Then flee, and come to me, and I will make thee rich!"

Omer took the costly garment, and strapped it to his saddle, which he laid upon the mule, mounted, and silently rode away. Miriam turned to Rapha with a smile:

"I feel as proud as Judith with the head of that Holofernes in my hands!"

And Rapha replied:

"Would I could see him in his shame! Omer will study out the least details of the scene to-night; and he does thorough work."

They were already climbing down the hillside to shorten their way to the resting place of their company.



CHAPTER VIII

BAD COMPANY

WHEN Gaddiel left Miriam at the spring, he proceeded through the clumps and clusters of vines and shrubbery until he reached the Great Road. It was not safe for him to be discovered journeying on the highway at this time of day, because the Sabbath had already set in. Therefore he would remain under cover until nightfall, when the roads in the vicinity of the city would be deserted, and the way to Bethphage, which snuggled in the bosom of the hills and was of little consequence, would be clear. He might encounter a prowling highwayman on his return to the road of Jericho; but he would provide himself with weapons at the inn, and fight his way back to his love, if it were necessary.

Once while he was crouching in the thick clusters of the sycamores, he was startled; he thought he heard the swishing of hard linen against the thorns and branches of the shrubbery, and the crackling of breaking fagots under a cautious tread. He listened with bated breath; but it might be a fancy of his whirling brain.

The night came early in this wilderness. He crawled out of his hiding place, and strained his hearing to detect any sound that might betray the presence of a human being. But the road was as still as the graves in the deep shadows of the mountain side.

The proprietor of the inn, where he called at this unseemly hour, was not a Jew, and it would have been as difficult to fix his features as to classify his descent and religious per-

suasion. He was a native of Alexandria; his father was a castaway, because he had married a pagan Egyptian. This woman, later a proselyte, was his mother. He had been educated in the schools of his native city; but by his youthful excesses in revel and riot he had ruined his prospects of an honorable career at home. He drifted out into the wide world, took up the sword for a while, then taught the sons of wealthy Jews at Tyre and Sidon the Greek language, and instructed them in Greek literature and philosophy. Gaddiel, however, had met him at Capernaum some years before as the instructor of some of his young friends, and had attended some of their frolics not always in strict accordance with Jewish law and tradition. Silas, to which his more intimate acquaintances added the surname, the "Wicked," was a godless man.

His wickedness appeared to be inborn. He would draw into his instructions matter wholly irrelevant to their purpose, only to enable him to relate one or the other of his disreputable adventures to the eager youths. No one who knew him considered him honest, no one, sincere. He loved wickedness for its own sake. He had married the daughter of a Greek merchant at Alexandria, a pure and beautiful maiden. She had borne him a daughter, whom he had named Callidora, the "pretty gift," because she was a child of remarkable daintiness and beauty; but he had not seen mother or child for ten years. Now he was "married" to a Phenician, who had also borne him children.

When he witnessed the throngs that visited Jerusalem several times every year, he established an inn at Bethphage in order to garner some of the abundance which flowed into the Holy City at these periods. Rumor had it that he was in possession of a charm which would strike the robbers of the mountain paths to Jericho with temporary blindness, so that they had to let those in possession of his amulet pass without molestation. It was also rumored that he knew

the nests and dens of the prowlers, and could locate any band within a day. And some even said, although only in secret, that he was their chief.

Gaddiel was cognizant of all these evil reports and convinced of their truth. But just this man's services were invaluable to him this night. If he could reach Jericho under his protection, his farther progress was only a matter of caution and energy. Besides, should he find it necessary to ask a passport through the desert of Judea, if the highways were not safe enough, the chief's recommendation would procure it at any station. He felt, it is true, the humiliation of making himself the ward of thieves and cut-throats; but his course demanded protection against the onerous regulations of public propriety of the making of the Scribes. Would they permit him to conduct Miriam to the house of his father with the honors of a bridal procession, he would be relieved of his distress, and would rejoice to join hands with the guardians of the peace against the robbers. But now he must invoke the assistance of outlaws to circumvent the injunctions of the lawyers: he would carry off Miriam despite all laws, human or divine. She was his now, and his she must be forever!

He turned from the road at the entrance of the inn. The gates were locked. This he had anticipated. But he knew a secret port in the rear wall. His familiarity with the premises did not speak in his favor; he had had dealings with the "wicked one" before. Indeed, Silas had lent him the sum which he had spent in buying the Syrian horses. But that was paid back out of the proceeds of a sale of wine which he had made for his father, retaining his "fee" out of the price.

As he pushed open the low gate, he was stopped by the gleam of a dagger pointed at his heart. At the same time his neck was gripped by an iron fist, and his right arm drawn back upwards. It was a neat way, he thought, of rendering

even a giant helpless. But he was not much surprised. He whispered his name. One of the guards disappeared in the house, but the other still held him fast. In a short time the guard returned with the master of the house, who put his face very close to that of Gaddiel for a moment, and having satisfied himself of his identity, ordered his release, and led him into the house by the hand.

"Money?" he began laconically, after he had offered his distinguished visitor a seat on a bench, littered with blood-begrimed clothes.

"No; horses"; responded Gaddiel with equal precision.

"How many?"

"Two."

"Whither?"

"To Jericho, by the mountain road."

"One hundred shekels!"¹

"Make it fifty."

"One hundred." And Silas presented his large palm.

His guest produced a fat purse, and conscientiously counted out four minas² of gold, and a few silver coins. Silas stowed away the money in his bosom, where he seemed to carry an open pouch or large pocket, and continued:

"The roads are full of prowlers during the feast-days, and this year the desperate ones of the Mountains of Galilee have descended upon us. I wish thee well; I will give thee the company of a guard, that thou mayst not come to grief with thy dove."

Gaddiel was surprised at the last remark. His host, noticing this natural emotion, explained:

"Thou canst not leave a dead beast in the road, when the rider is known, without betraying the flight of the rider. Away, boy! The nights are short these busy days."

He arose and conducted the young man to an enclosure, into which he called the names of two horses; they came up

¹ A shekel of silver = .66½; of gold = \$10.

² Mina \$16.12.

immediately and snorting with pleasure put their noses over the gate. Silas drew the bolts, and they stepped out.

Gaddiel knew by the lightness and daintiness of their step, the hoofs softly striking the pavement with a quick and precise patter, that they were excellent beasts, equal to the arduous task which they were required to perform.

Meanwhile Silas had disappeared in a neighboring stall, from which he emerged now with two saddles, and a light. At the same time a horseman, fully equipped and armed, came from somewhere out of the darkness. Silas threw a saddle to Gaddiel. In a trice the horses were ready, the host having himself fastened the woman's saddle.¹ The guard threw a halter over the head of the free beast, Gaddiel mounted, and they rode away into the darkness, the guard leading the way and setting up a sharp pace as soon as they struck the main road.

"Another fool's errand," remarked the keeper to the guards at the port as he passed into the house.

Several times during their trip over the road on the crest of the dark range, they saw black figures dart across the path ahead of them, but then the guide would only utter a low whistling sound through his teeth, like the spitting of a cat. No one molested them.

They came upon the carcass of Gaddiel's horse. He dismounted, and was about to plunge into the dark under-brush and shrubbery, when his guide stopped him with his spear.

"Didst thou forsake her in this lonely spot?"

"At the spring beyond," Gaddiel replied impatiently, and pushed the spear aside. But the guide forced him back, and uttered the shriek of the heron, upon which two men stood before them as if they had dropped from the trees.

"Have ye a woman at the water?" he questioned them.

"No," one replied; "she left before nightfall."

¹ A thick roll fastened back of the shoulders of the mount.

“Alone?”

“In the company of one Rapha, the friend of the Keriothite;¹ the other went up towards the City; he is now resting himself and his beast in the shadow of the Eastern gate.”

“Where is the woman?”

“At Bethania, at her brother’s house” (which was the false report of Judas).

“And where is Judas?”

“At Bethania.”

She was alive, then, and safe: “At least this little consolation for my sore bosom!” thought Gaddiel. But he must follow her. He doubted now whether she would flee for him, and leave her large estates behind. He became sober gradually amid these uncanny surroundings. He began only now to notice the hurried and dull beating of his temples. Was he not insane to carry her off, when at home she was such a courteous neighbor? Was it not better to make his plans with her consent? She could sell her holdings, and they would be wealthier than the queen of Sheba, he boasted. He was still exalted.

But the thought of his father, who must be searching for him now suggesting itself with the force of cowardly fear, sobered him completely. And his coat in her hands! But perhaps she left it at the spring. Then the prowlers must have found it.

He asked of one: “Have ye found a coat at the spring, or anywhere here about?”

“No,” one made quick reply; “thy coat is in good hands. It will be returned to thee on the morrow.”

“Hast thou seen it?” Gaddiel insisted.

“Ay, little man! Omer, whom thou knowest, is resting his head upon it under the city gate which opens on the Olive hills. Thou shalt find him on thy return.”

“Then let us return.”

¹ Judas.

The highwaymen were swallowed up in the darkness, and Gaddiel returned with his guide. He was now quite anxious to obliterate the memory and the traces of his wild adventure, in order to be able to present himself before his father this night with an unsuspecting countenance. For although he had grievously wounded his conscience, he was not yet an expert in the art of dissembling to the degree of shamelessness. There was little strength in his character at all events. He would be led by fancies and moods; and when they were dissolved, he was thrown upon his own resourceless poverty of invention and counsel; he had no principles to support and direct his aims.

At Bethphage the guide left him, deaf to his pleadings, without a horse, because, the robber argued, the horses were hired for the journey to Jericho; "if thou dost not keep the pact, why should my master?" — He had to cross the Mount of Olives alone, and on foot, and it was now past midnight. But from what he had heard and seen in the meeting of the robbers, he felt assured of his own immunity from danger, and knew that their attention was ubiquitous, and their knowledge of things going on in the dark, universal. Had he not heard the name of Judas mentioned? Was he in league with the prowlers of the night? What if he would appear now, and ask another instalment on the debt which he had threatened to collect! The thought made his hair stand on end with fear. He stood still a few minutes to relieve his panting breast; he trembled so much, however, that walking seemed a comfort. It was so dark and still that the hooting of the owls sounded to him like a protest from the dead who rested in the caves along the mountain side. He shambled and shuffled along like a breathless beast under a heavy burden. Bitter sorrow gnawed at his heart, and he was silently cursing now his cowardice, and now his sin. He could not conceive a plan to mislead the suspicions of his angered father. He almost wished in despair that some-

one would come to rob him, and beat him just severely enough to leave a few welts as a corroboration of the tale of misfortune which he was concocting. And the unfortunate disappearance of the coat could easily be explained: for he did not think that Omer would sleep at the gate all night. And if the coat was returned: Ah, he would be at the inn all day, nursing his bruises, and receive it in person — the sire would be in the Temple the greater part of the day.

He had scarcely thought himself into consolation with this cruel reverie, when a powerful man plunged from the thicket, and, without a word, sprang at him and snatched his purse, tearing away the belt and part of the garment. He wore a mask over his eyes, a precaution hardly necessary in the utter darkness. With the left hand he had gripped his victim's throat, and now, before he left him, struck him a staggering blow in the face, so that he swayed and fell in his tracks.

How long he had lain in the road, he did not know; but when he awoke he found himself at his inn, surrounded by his father's company. The father had already betaken himself to his station in the Temple. He had looked his boy over with much concern, and some dark doubts, as soon as he had been brought in in the early morning; and having assured himself that he was only grievously misused, had gone about his business. Gaddiel had not been really unconscious; he was dazed from the blow, and, as it were, lamed like one palsied. In his condition of overwrought sensibility at the time of the assault, the rude onset broke the tension with a snap, and left him powerless. A small troop of Ephraimites, who, in audacious disregard of the Holy Day of the Jews, were on their way to the city with a cart load of wine and fruits, had found him, and brought him to the city gate, where they put him in charge of the keepers. The latter had heard that a search had been instituted for the son of Simon Bar Jehu of Capernaum, and,

judging from the costly material of his dress that he was a wealthy Pharisee, had sent him to the house where his father's company were quartered.

Before the hour of the great holocaust, which was to take place toward noon, Simon returned to inquire about the condition of his son. Gaddiel had recovered sufficiently to relate the incident in detail, mentioning even the fact that despite the darkness he had noticed the mask over the robber's face. It was singular, indeed, that a highwayman should take the trouble to conceal his features from a lone traveler, who could not be familiar with them, Simon thought, and expressed his doubts at the *minutiae* of the description, by which Gaddiel gave his account the appearance of improbability. But he intended solely to forestall the inquiry after his whereabouts during the day and night previous to his encounter.

His father, however, was not misled. He questioned so persistently and systematically, goaded on by the sinister suspicion that his disappearance stood in some relation with the departure of the "Harlot of Gan-Sar" that the young man was nearly wearied and worried out of his reticence. But by a last effort of despair he conquered his faint-heartedness, and fell back on his couch, exhausted and silent. "The way of the sinners perisheth," the sire quoted. He heard it, and shuddered, remembering the heartlessness which his father had often shown towards those who had offended against the national traditions in lesser matters than his own. He had not fainted, but this was the only refuge open for him from the relentless aggression of his father.

Simon arose, and again repaired to the Temple, filled with suspicions that wound themselves ever more tightly about his heart. He would sift this matter, and bring all offenders to justice. But the offense of his son haunting the roads by night, and on the Great Paschal feast-day, caused him more bitterness than any other circumstance of

the escapade. So far only his long absence remained unexplained. Simon's eyes blazed with the angry fire of a demon, at the suspicion that his own flesh and blood should have been contaminated by the company of a woman who, Jewess though she were, lived the life of a "Sinner."¹

Omer had proceeded as far as the western slope of Mount Olivet and there awaited the night. After dark he had ridden down to the city gate, and feeling tired, and not wishing to provoke the anger or curiosity of the idlers in the streets, by appearing among them as a belated straggler, traveling on the Sabbath, he crouched in an angle of the elaborate portal, and went to sleep. Before sunrise, when the streets were yet empty, he had arrived at the quarters of Martha and her brother.

At the hour of the principal sacrifice he ascended the temple mount with the pious multitude thronging in from every direction. In the Temple he stationed himself at the balustrade that separated the narrow court of the men from that of the priests. But Simon was nowhere to be seen.

After the sacrifices were completed, Omer repaired to the spacious and beautiful Court of Solomon. His heart jumped for joy as he heard Simon's voice ring out. There he stood on a low platform, surrounded by a large number of men, explaining to them with much unction the prohibition of the Thora, leveled against the intercourse of the true Jews with the enemies of the land and the nation, and extolling the virtues of his own sect, such as their zeal in observing even the minutest details of the law; their self-denial, their devotion to the Temple and to the national cause. He roundly berated the Sadducees with their desertion from the house of Israel; "the vileness of whose treason and infidelity is a

¹ "Sinner"-was employed specifically to designate those who denied their Jewish nationality either by word or deed, and made common cause with the foreigners. Tirinus: Matt. 9, 10; note.

stench in our nostrils," he concluded amid a confused murmur of applause.

At this moment Omer came forward, and touched Simon's arm as he stepped from the platform. The Pharisee was incensed at the familiarity of the drudge that Omer appeared to be, and spread out the fingers of both hands against him in contempt. But Omer was not disturbed; he stepped back two or three paces, and unrolling Gaddiel's coat, spread it out on the pavement. Then he looked at Simon quizzically, and held out his arms in the same manner as the other. The scene looked ludicrous, and drew the curiosity and attention of the bystanders.

"This is Gaddiel's coat!" Simon exploded; "where hast thou found it?"

Omer drew himself up, and raising his right hand against the face of Simon, and pointing his finger at him, answered with the deliberation of a fool:

"The 'Harlot of Gan-Sar' sendeth this to thee as a token of her troth with thy son."

Simon reeled; the bystanders cocked up their ears to hear more, but Omer turned on his heels, and ran away. The smiles spreading slowly on the faces which were all turned upon Simon told legends of malignity and much relished satisfaction. But when Simon, in a burst of ungovernable rage, shouted:

"Hold the thief! Stop the robber! He has slain my son!" the whole troop turned in pursuit of the supposed highwayman.

The law which forbade them to travel more than two thousand paces on a Sabbath day stood Omer in good stead. He ran down the hill and through the gate, avoiding contact with the surprised and gaping onlookers as nimbly as a weasel, flung himself on his mule, which was standing ready at the gate of his inn, and sped away toward an unguarded port. and swimming across the Kidron disappeared in the direc-

tion of the Mount of Olives. The generous proportions of the Pharisees, which presented a decided protuberance of the hypogastric region rather than generous symmetry of figure, made the early cessation of the chase both a necessity and a pleasure. So the pursuers left the matter in Simon's hands, and went their several ways, wagging their heads dubiously, and pointedly commenting on "the wily old man's cunning." There was not one to take a charitable view of his troubles.



Simon himself soon wearied of the useless pursuit. What did he know of the circumstances of his son's unexplained absence? Did this fearful disgrace not cover his own suspicions? Was it not possible that the coat was not at all involved in the attack? And if that servant knew of the robbery, would he have risked apprehension for the crime by furnishing proof of his guilt, or his participation? "Nay, nay, Simon," he said to himself, as he pulled the hood of his mantle over his eyes; "Omer knows nothing of the fate of thy son. But thy son shall render thee an accounting, even if it be unto his death!" he added fiercely. He felt relieved at the thought that Omer had escaped. Had he been caught, he must be presented before the council, and who knows but that he might make most undesirable revelations, and blast the reputation of his house forever. He would some day find occasion to interview Omer, inasmuch as they were neighbors, and Omer, being only a servant, would not long remain deaf to the knocking of the golden finger.

He consoled himself for the present with the assurance that he would invent a method of evading the curiosity of his colleagues; the common people surely would not remember the incident over night. He would invite them to visit his son on his couch of pain and convince themselves at his sight of the reality of the assault; the inference he would

leave to their own ingenuity to draw. The days were so busy, and the minds so preoccupied, that even if his suspicions proved to be founded on fact, as he himself believed they were, the unsavory rumor would die out in the general agitation. He had heard the report that the Zealots were preparing an uprising in protest against the sacrilegious audacity of Pilate, who proposed to build an aqueduct and pay the cost with the money to be taken from the Temple treasury.¹ He had repeatedly noticed, since his arrival in the city, that the leaders of the patriots were gathering about themselves severally the heads of families, giving them secret instructions. In two or three days at most the riot must break loose, and ordinary affairs would be forgotten. "Would to the Lord our God it were over!" he sighed as he set his foot on the threshold of his lodging.

Gaddiel awaited the return of his tormentor, as he called his father in his heart, with the determination to make no confession whatever, and to flee the following night toward Magedan, the residence of the woman, whose coyness and apparent terror at his perseverance had enchanted him. But the cruel stare in his father's eyes, as he stationed himself at the foot of the couch, filled him with cowardly dread. Yet he repeated his resolutions with the silly confidence of a schoolboy caught unprepared, to die rather than to confess a shame equal to death.

Simon drew the traitorous coat from under his own mantle, and with much show and circumstance spread it over the couch. There were stains of blood on it, here and there, probably spattered thereon from the death wound of Miriam's mare, or of Gaddiel's own horse. They were dry and black, whereas the stains on the garments in which he had been brought home had been found to be quite fresh and moist. Simon took up the tunic which had been laid aside when they had put the wounded young man

¹ Jos. Flav. Jewish Antiquit. XVIII, 3, 2.

to bed, and examined the blotches, rubbing his fingers over them. They were still soft. Then he rubbed his fingers over the stains on the coat: they were as dry as the garment itself.

Gaddiel had followed the examination with great interest. Now Simon opened the oral examination, addressing his son with wounded tenderness:

"Gaddiel — Grace of God!"¹ — He hesitated, his voice choking with emotion. Gaddiel was startled at the solemnity of his father's speech and ceremony.

"Gaddiel," the father resumed presently, "thou hast been in the hands of the 'Harlot.'" He stopped abruptly, not now from emotion of injury, but from anger. Gaddiel was silent. Simon waited a long while for a reply, his dark, piercing eyes penetrating into the guilty soul of his son. Then suddenly he broke forth in a voice roaring with the fury of indignation:

"Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in my innocence, and I have put my trust in the Lord, and shall not be weakened!"² And turning toward his trembling son, he cried:

"And be thou laden with thy father's curse all the days of thy life. May heaven contain its mercies from thee in the hours of thy infirmity, and mayest thou descend into hell without seed, the reproach and judgment of all that speak a word of comfort unto thee!" And as the tears started in his eyes, he tore Gaddiel's coat in two, and flinging the pieces in the latter's face, exclaimed:

"Verily this is my son's coat; an evil beast hath eaten him, a beast hath devoured Joseph!"³

Then he left his son alone, and gave orders to his company to leave the house and seek other quarters. When the riot would break out, it would be safer to be lodged far away

¹ Gaddiel signifies: God bringeth luck.

² Ps. 25, 1.

³ Genes. 37, 33.

from the center of the conflict, the Temple, and if Gaddiel was killed in the tumult — Simon hung his head without completing the cruel thought. He was his son, his first born, his only son — but he had held communion with the “Harlot of Gan-Sar”! Away with him!

CHAPTER IX

BLIGHTED

THE revolt broke out only after the feast-days were over. But rapidly it gained such proportions as to defy the direction of its instigators. The exasperated populace, stirred up to fanaticism by the wailings of the priests and the apparent zeal for the cause of God manifested by the patriots, who had come down unheralded from the mountains of Galilee, broke away from priests and patriots, and joined to their zeal for the religious cause all the hatred which they had long nourished in private against the haughty Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. The numbers of the fanatics were swelled by the thousands of visitors from foreign lands, who made more of the grievances of their brethren in the Holy City than they themselves. On they surged through the streets from the lower city, and soon overspread the spacious openings in the vicinity of the Temple and the Prætorium.

Under the circumstances the governor considered himself privileged to let the Jews feel the severity of Roman discipline. But he would not give the insurgents even the excuse, in the event of a pitched battle causing entanglements with the authorities in Rome, that they were provoked to greater excesses than they had intended. He sent his soldiers among them, in the streets and in the Temple, with clubs concealed in their cloaks. They would club them to death at various places at once, like cattle or rabid dogs.¹ They forced their way even into the sanctuary, and

¹ "The consequence was that many Jews were mortally wounded by the blows, and many others thrown down and trampled to death by their own people in their flight." (*Jewish War*, Bk 2, 9).

felled their victims in the very shadow of the altar of holocausts. In a short time the fanaticism was drowned in blood, and Pilate had made himself guilty of nothing more than a speedy suppression of an incipient revolution. Disappointment was universal. The patriots fled in all directions to their mountain fastnesses, and the pilgrims, who escaped the massacre, repaired to their respective homes with all the expedition desired for the sake of order and peace.

Silas, who was in league with the robbers, who, in their turn, had many acquaintances among the patriots of the mountains, was too prudent to manifest any practical interest in this uprising, although he did not discountenance the participation of as many of his hirelings as might wish to lend a hand in the disturbance, and in the division of the possible spoils. He lost only a few men killed, and one, Barabbas,¹ a sub-chief, much distinguished for daring and cold-bloodedness, taken prisoner.



Jesus of Nazareth had already left the city, where the snobbishness of the rulers and the blank curiosity of the people would make his teaching unfruitful of results such as he desired. He had repaired to the province, the towns and hamlets of Judea, where he labored with indefatigable zeal, with forgiving love, with undismayed courage, in the face of conditions as little favorable to his holy ambitions as those of the stagnating city life. He taught and entreated, he pleaded and prayed, he healed and helped; but to no purpose: the Judeans were overfed from the husks of the Thora, and had no room for the acquisition of the ideals that he set up before their sight. They were famished, and yet not hungry; they were parched, and yet not thirsty; they were worn out, and yet not weary: Judea was sick to

¹ Luke calls Barabbas "vinctum insignem;" distinguished prisoner; taken prisoner in *that* uprising, well-known; and John: "a robber."

the core of her heart, and would not accept her physician, because she had become so accustomed to her disease that she dreaded a radical change in her conditions. She nursed her ills with the jealousy of one wounded to death, and afraid of the surgeon's hand that would reopen the wound to cleanse and heal it. Hence after a sojourn of a few short months in Judea, the Prophet was again found in his favorite field, the region of Gennesar, about the Sea of Galilee.

Simon of Capernaum, the Pharisee, had escaped unhurt with all his train of domestics and friends. He had left the lower city two days before the outbreak of the rebellion, having perceived signs of treason among the officials of the proprietor. He sounded the alarm to his friends in his own sect, who also held aloof thereafter from the disturbance as from a doomed failure, and went into hiding. It was the people and the priests who were put to the knife; but had they succeeded in humbling Pilate, the Pharisees would have worn the wreaths of the victors with pride.

Miriam of Magedan with her party had arrived home before the news of the bloody strife spread abroad. She felt little sympathy for the hot-spurs of Judea "who paid tribute to Cæsar, and accepted Cæsar's image on their coins, and yet hated the hand that protected them"; or, as she put it at other times, "who tickled Cæsar near the heart with a dagger."

The one upon whom the past two weeks seemed to have made the deepest and most unfavorable impression was Thamar, the "chick." She drooped visibly like a young olive planted upon scanty soil, and struggling faintly against the merciless glare of the sun and the niggardliness of the ground. She appeared to be sick at heart, and wilting and shrinking in her body. But there appeared a fascinating radiance in her eyes, a noble resignation upon her brow, an intense but well-governed anxiety withal, in her pose and speech. She seemed comparable to a water lily, now poising

its beautiful head over its cool grave, and unfolding its loveliness in its death.

Rapha spent himself in untiring efforts to banish the blight that had surely overtaken her. But he gloried, at the same time, at the revelation of such serene beauty as he had never conceived she could be capable of putting on. Now and again he would endeavor to seize her hand in order to kiss it, or to stroke her black, lustrous tresses; but she would petulantly put him off, and conceal her hands in her mantle, or veil her head entirely in his presence. He could not understand her pettishness, except as the whimsical concern of an over-modest child.

But one morning, as he passed the bower where he had first found her sick to death, he saw her reclining there in sleep. The left hand had fallen from her lap, and the arm was bare almost to the shoulder. He stood, gazing at the little sufferer with eyes of love and sympathy. But her modesty had become so sacred to him that he would not offend it even in secret. He advanced a little into the shade of the vine, just to soothe a pang at his heart caused by the doubt that she might have fallen asleep weeping. And in truth, he saw the silvery drops glistening on the ends of her dark lashes. Why would she always be found weeping in secret? He looked at the bare arm for signs of failing health; but it was plump and pure. He stooped forward: he thought there was a spot on the arm, cast upon it by a sun beam filtering through the dense foliage; it appeared whiter than the rest — and, to his horror, showed no veins, and was deeper than the flesh of the arm: Thamar was a leper!

Rapha was struck dumb with horror. Now he knew the mystery of her failing health and drooping spirits, and of her petulant defense against his tokens of affection! His “dove” the prey of the most loathsome of diseases, leprosy! She must be separated from the society of the healthy, and be cast out from the company of her friends; she must be

pronounced unclean, the subject of the wrath of their God!

But Rapha had room for the tenderest sympathy beside the horror in his heart. Recovering from his dismay, he knelt on the ground, and raising his brimming eyes and his hands to heaven he prayed aloud:

"O God of mercy and compassion! Stay Thy hand over this afflicted child, and lay Thy scourge upon me, a sinner. Who hast by Thy prophet ¹ cleansed Naaman, the Syrian, from the dreadful plague, cleanse her for the sake of Thy compassion with Thy people Israel!" And taking her hand, he drew the spotted arm to his lips and kissed the sore.

Thamar had awakened at his loud prayer, and was now looking at him with mingled love and terror.

"I am unclean," she said sorrowfully, but with such sweetness that Rapha wondered; "I must go out into the desert places," she continued, rising, and baring the right arm, from which she removed a bandage. It bore the fully developed sore of the plague, a blossom of decay in the healthy flesh.

Rapha wept in silence. But she appeared cheerful now that her dreadful secret was revealed, and the spell of silent terror broken. She accepted her awful fate with more resignation than one would expect to find in one so delicate, and a stranger to the merciful dispensation of God, which was so often displayed in behalf of his chosen people. But there was a well of comfort in her innermost soul, unsuspected by those who were wont to look no deeper than the stomach, and to try no harder than the imagination.

"Comfort thee, Rapha," she said; "there is a prophet in Israel, who will not reject the stranger from his face. His return to this region I will bide, and him accost to heal me of this plague. My trust is rooted deep that he will save me."

¹ Elisha.

"Speakest thou of the Prophet of Nazareth?" Rapha inquired. "If prophet he be, as I doubt not, he will not take the bread from the children and cast it to the dogs.¹ Thou art not a daughter of the House; he may not hear thy prayer."

But Thamar answered confidently: "Is thy God, O Rapha, not my God? If Abraham be thy father, and Ham be mine, is not Shem the brother of Ham, and Abraham the son of Shem, the son of God, who made Abraham in Shem, and Shem in Adam? Do thou not set a bound to the power of thy God, and straighten His mercy; He is the God of all His adorers. And hast thou heard the Man of Nazareth call thy God his father? 'The house of my Father ye have made a house of traffic'; Go to, Rapha; dry thy tears, and let me away! But tell him of my plight when thou meetest him, the Prophet of Nazareth, the Son of thy God!"

Rapha listened with an astonishment that lifted up his own heart on the wings of strangely new hopes.

"Is thy trust so strong, my maid," he ejaculated, "that thou canst forget the wall which standeth between Israel and the Gentiles?"

"Rapha," she replied ardently, "there is no wall so high that it could shut out the mercy of Heaven. It is thy people who have raised a barrier against the nations, not thy God. Did He not show mercy to Nineveh, and bargain with Abraham for the salvation of the Five Cities?² Did He not send His prophet to the widow of Sarepta in the land of the Sidonians? Hast thou thyself not reminded Him in thy prayer of Naaman, the Syrian leper? Hath thy God at any time contained His mercy from them who cried to Him? It seemeth, in truth, that your God fenced you round about for your preservation, but not for His own limitation! Is thine eye evil because He is good? He limits His visible favors to the people of His choice, but extends His mercies

¹ Matt. 15, 26.

² Sodom, Gomorrha, Adama, Zeboim, and Segor.

over all that he made. And did He not foretell that ‘He will seek that which was lost, and bring back that which was driven away, and bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick; but will destroy the fat and strong’?¹ And again saith He: ‘I will set up one shepherd over them and he shall feed them even as my servant David; he shall feed them and he shall be their shepherd.’² ‘I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto Moses, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him!’³—Rapha, thy people, in the narrowness and hardness of their hearts, in their vanity over the selection of the Almighty God, have put their own imbecile limitation upon His universal benedictions and promises of universal Salvation, for ‘all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.’⁴ This is my faith, that the Prophet hath appeared among us, the great Shepherd, the Salvation of our God, who shall seek that which was lost, and heal the broken-hearted, and raise up the faint and feeble by the wayside. And if he cleanse me not, Rapha,” she raised her right hand to heaven and spoke as one ravished by a vision, “I shall gladly die for his love even as the khabatzeleth,⁵ breathing its fragrance over the foot that trod it down!”

The maiden had risen, with the blush of intense fervor on her cheeks. She seemed inspired, enraptured, transported with the bliss of supernatural inspiration, so much like the heroic daughter of Jephtha the Gileadite standing on the altar under the knife of her unfortunate father.⁶

Her simple faith was not understood by her lover, nursed, as he had been, with vanity by the Daughter of Sion. He was, also, as most of the Judeans of his day, so deeply convinced of God’s neglect of the rest of the world that he

¹ Ezek. 24, 16.

² Ezek. 24, 34.

³ Deut. 18, 18.

⁴ Ps. 97, 3.

⁵ Probably the sweet Narzissus tazetta, most abundant on the plain of Sharon.

⁶ Judges, 11, 34 ff.

felt the allusion to God's universal fatherhood, and to the Messiah's universal mediatorship, as an insult to his religious and patriotic sensibilities. And although he had a faint presentiment of gladness at such beauty and grandeur of divine mercy and forgiveness in his heart; although his idea of God was illumined with new and glorious light in the unwonted conception of such truly divine commiseration, and his God appeared more majestic and more holy to him; still, the long centuries of national seclusion, and religious jealousy toward the outside world, had sapped the life of love and sympathy in Sion's bosom. No matter how ardently he might love the maiden before him, no matter how pure his affection might rill and revel through his heart, it was a selfish, a lonely heart, that hungered with the greediness of a dog. He begrudged even her, whom he loved most, a possible share of their exclusive paternal heritage. His God was the God of the Jews; his glory, to lord it over the peoples of the earth in the name of that God. The earth and its empire belonged by right to the Jew, and he who would allow a stranger to come into the inheritance with him was his enemy. And if the Messiah would once intimate a deviation from the national traditions, he, Rapha, would have done with him, as also surely would the priests and the leaders. "But," he continued his thoughts aloud, "there is a long cry between a prophet and the Messiah, the Man of Nazareth and the Anointed of the Lord."

But the plausibility of her argument, and especially her heroic resignation, that brought her down prostrate at the feet of the humble Man of Nazareth, whom he could envy for his wonderful power over the heart of this maiden, nettled him severely. His very soul protested against her faith. But if Jesus of Nazareth would cleanse her, he would try to make a sacrifice, which he thought impossible of exactation from him, of the belief of his people, that God was the God of the Jews alone.

Thamar saw clearly that Rapha was not yet ready to share her simple and honest faith. She turned from him with a sigh of pity, and was about to leave the arbor when Miriam entered at the opposite side. Her appearance was as unexpected as most of her actions in the last few weeks, and the unfortunate maid had not had time to recover from her surprise sufficiently to conceal the scab on her right arm. Miriam saw it at a glance, and taking the strange behavior of her pet into account, drew the correct conclusion without hesitation. She threw up her hands in horror, and shrieking, "Away, away!" fled back to the house.

There she caused consternation among the servants by her command that everything must be cleansed and washed, and that she would depart in an hour for Callirhoe, the baths of the Gentiles. "And Thamar send ye out into the desert, for she is unclean," she cried into the ears of everyone whom she could find. She superintended in person the vesting of her maids, who must dress in fresh new linen, after a bath so hot that they were as rosy red as the clusters of the oleander blossoms by the brook. She filled the cedar chests with linen and silks which had never been used, and strewed the powder of mastick¹ and saffron between the several layers, and burned myrrh under them with her own hands. Then she saturated large cloths with precious spikenard, and laid them over the garments, before the chests were closed and locked. When all was ready she called Omer, that he might saddle her Syrian mare, the gift of Gaddiel, and prepare to keep her company on the way.

But Thamar was cast out; and all her belongings and her bed were burned in the field. The head of the synagogue of Magedan, who was of priestly rank, pronounced her unclean, and separated her from the community. She went forth from the habitations of men into the wilderness, like a child cast out from house and home, awaiting the friend-

¹ A fragrant white resin of the Pistacia lentiscus

ship of warmer hearts among strangers; but in her heart she bore away the treasure of her imperturbable faith in the Prophet.

Rapha wailed and wept, and followed her from afar into her new abode, a cavern in the wild mountains of Asamom, north of the road of Ptolemais. There he secured, from a good woman of Rama, the promise that she would daily set out a pot of food for the unfortunate child, and would minister to her other wants in proportion to his generosity in furnishing the means and her wages.

When he returned from his mission of charity, Miriam had already departed, and left the estate in his charge. He had become a very sober man in a few days, especially through the shock at the inhuman hurry with which his fastidious mistress had cast off her "chick," and at the cowardly fear of contagion that she had manifested by her hasty departure. Rapha had lost much respect, and all his love, for his proud and self-important mistress.



CHAPTER X

A DISCOVERY

GADDIEL had not had the heart openly to confirm his father's suspicions; for such his misgivings must still be in view of the scant evidence of his son's crime: he dared not to follow Miriam to her palace, much as he desired her companionship. He had remained in the house where his father had cursed him. The day after Simon had vacated the house, one of the servants brought Gaddiel a large leather pouch filled with gold, and the verbal message: "This is thy inheritance from Simon Bar Jehu."

He was cast out of his father's house, and cut off from his paternal heritage. Simon would no longer call him his son; Gaddiel knew that his father never relented. His fate was sealed, and he was a free man, albeit at the cost of the dearest ties on earth.

When the storm of rebellion broke over the city, he sided with the people, more for the joy of the excitement than from enthusiasm for the holy cause. He was one of the few that escaped by a subterranean passage from the Temple, when the victim of the holocaust on the altar was bespattered with the blood of the Levites and priests, and the fanatical defenders of the sanctuary were falling round about like the wheat over the scythe. But he had lost his money. The few coins left in his belt would scarcely pay for a horse, and he had to flee.

After remaining in hiding a few days in the trenches of the aqueduct of Herod, he made his escape from the city, and fled to the inn of Silas, whom he found making prepara-

tions for flight. The city had become too unsafe to be a shelter for a man under suspicion as an accomplice of the restless bands of prowlers, who were causing so much annoyance both to Herod in Galilee, and to the governor of Judea. He thought it prudent to withdraw his presence for a while from the vigilance of the Roman guards. In these circumstances he hailed Gaddiel as a fellow in suffering, and most readily provided him with a mount as good as was to be obtained from his stables, and with the necessary equipment of both gold and steel.

Silas, although making preparations hurriedly, was nevertheless circumspect enough to provide against threatening perils. He had not been on the roads before, to consign his fate to chance. He would ever be master of the situations likely to develop. His weapons were few and small, but made of the best material, and of excellent workmanship: the head of a spear, with point and edges whetted to the keenness of a razor, but, unlike the spears of the soldiers, worn on the belt, having attached a stout braided thong, of the length of nine or ten cubits, instead of a shaft. In an encounter he would fling it at his adversary with the skill of an archer, and withdraw it by means of the leather leash. His dagger was a savagely curved blade of blue steel, about eight inches in length, with a heft of thyine wood,¹ which was mounted with silver ornaments, as much for appearance as for solidity. It was grooved on both sides to allow the blood to flow from the wound, if perchance the blade should stick fast in the victim. The only other weapon upon him was his sword. He had bought it from an Egyptian dealer, with the assurance that it had been handed down from generation to generation from the days of Alexander. It was a curious weapon, measuring from hilt to point only one and a half cubits, was slightly curved and very heavy. Toward the middle the blade broadened considerably, both

¹ Citron wood, most beautiful and durable.

edge and back tapering again towards the point. It resembled a cleaver more than a sword. The hilt was inlaid with small silver and gold disks and shields, all engraved with hieroglyphics, and was bound with silver rings over rings of steel. The steel rings were rather so many oval plates, alternating with plates of bone, thus making the hilt to consist of as many sections as there were plates, rendering it indestructible, and at the same time offering a hold that would never slip.

Before he bestowed these weapons in his belt, he examined them carefully, running the nail of his thumb over the edges to ascertain whether they were still smooth and keen. He looked up at Gaddiel, who but stared at these marvels of the swordmaker's art in open-mouthed wonder, and remarked dryly with a cynical smile:

"Sure keys to hell!" Then he selected a javelin, a sword, and a practical dirk for his companion.

Out upon the road they looked as peaceful as the pilgrims who had two weeks before wended their way on the same roads towards the festive city. They were enveloped in coarse and soiled cloaks, and their horses were dusty and uncurried. But under their uncouth exterior was hidden the splendor of fine garments, the finest that a prince could wear.

They held toward the road of Sichem, which leads straight through Samaria. In that part of the country nobody would inquire about their business or object. The Samaritans were a quiet people, industrious, and given to the use of wine to a greater extent than served their need. The Judeans were accustomed to speak of their capital derisively as Sichar, the "Drunken one," instead of Sichem.¹ Wherever they stopped on their weary way, they were received courteously, and hospitality was pressed upon them. Once and again they yielded to the sweet temptation of the

¹ Isaiah, 23.

bumper, and tested the strength of the generous wine of Ephraim to their own sorrow and temporary discouragement. Gaddiel overcame his aversion for the “godless” sect only with difficulty; but in the face of such whole-souled generosity the task of repressing his irony and contempt was made easy. Silas had no prejudice against any man who had money or could otherwise be of service to him. A Gadarene swine-herd, a very abomination in the sight of a Judean, was worth as much or as little to him as the high priest in Jerusalem. There was only one man whom he despised: when Gaddiel related to him the encounter in that night of his ruin, Silas snarled: “The Keriothite!”¹ and snapped his jaws with an unalterable determination to square his accounts with him, “who is,” he added savagely, “at all events, an incorrigible scoundrel.”

The abundance of good things made them tarry with these simple people much beyond their appointed time. Yet they thought it profitable to their purpose of joining the straggling Galilean bands, to wait until the storm hanging over the heads of the outlaws would be spent; they themselves were safely moored in a quiet port.

Gaddiel indeed now burned with the desire of visiting Miriam; but he became the less assured of an open welcome the nearer they approached the confines of Gennesar. It occurred to him, as the mist of his mental confusion cleared, that her conduct toward him at the last meeting was suspicious. He could overlook her escape from the darkness and dangers of the wooded hillside, and was wondering now that he had at all been so foolish as to ask a young woman to remain alone in the lair of the highwaymen at night. He understood also that she had had much reason to be frightened to madness at his own mad undertaking, when he placed her on his own mount against her will, and would abduct her from her home and country. But how came

¹ Judas.

his coat into Omer's hands? Yet, when his doubts became the most confusing, the remembrance of her exceeding fondness, which lured him into her bosom from the stronghold of his earnest resolve to fly from her, consoled him with its sweetness, and fired his blood with its promises. He had cast off for her sake his God, and was cast out of his father's house for her; she must now receive and retain him. Without her his life would be despair, his future an anticipated hell; but in her company, hell though it be for the tortures of jealousy and denied appetite, it would be hell borne with the intoxication of the distinction he craved, and of the promise of final success. And should she turn away from him, he would mix a cup of poisoned wine and drink an everlasting farewell with her, that she must follow him to his damnation. His passion had assumed the wickedness of diabolical frenzy.

Before they crossed the Kison at the "Altar of Elias" in the southwestern corner of Galilee, they sent a spy to Sepphoris. In that city resided Sadoc, the Pharisee, the most powerful chieftain of the Zealots; and although he was not a robber, yet the robbers were Zealots. In answer to their question, "whether the roads were safe," he sent the reply, that "safe they be by the brethren's spears." Upon this information they proceeded on the way to Magedan, whence Silas would continue his journey to Cesarea,¹ to pay his respects to some old friends who had the confidence of the Roman legate in Syria. He was anxious to reestablish his good name in the sight of the Roman authorities, lest Pilate in Judea should take it into his head in a fit of official zeal, to raid and destroy his profitable hostelry at the foot of Mount Olivet. Silas had always faithfully bled to the tappings to which the provincial captains had subjected his purse from time to time; but Pilate's temper had lately proved to be very erratic, "and may the devil know," Silas said to him-

¹ C. Philippi.

self, "what mischief an ungoverned temper can work." He would rather bask and batten in the favor of Pilate's superior, and be protected by Pilate's respect, than defy the gubernatorial spitfire.—The children of this world are wise in their generation.

After crossing the Kison, they headed their beasts north-east toward Gabara, and reached Rama on the morning of the second day. They had hugged the borders of Phenicia as long as possible, in order to be near a place of refuge, should the authorities at any moment renew their pursuit of the dispersed rebels. But there was not a sign of further search. The uprising seemed to be forgotten over the daily wranglings between the Jewish and the Roman officials; a continuation of visible hostility might prove prejudicial both to the covetousness of Pilate and to the ambitions of Caiphas, the high priest. In secret, however, the flame of hatred was nourished in every Jewish breast, and the Roman pretor, knowing that the Jews would never forgive him the sacrilegious opening of the Corban,¹ but at the same time wishing not to lose the favor of Tiberius by goading his subjects into open war against the reign of Rome, observed the conduct of a strict taskmaster toward priests and people.

Silas, who received his information from all the ends of Palestine, knew this state of things in a few days. So he persuaded his companion to turn toward the South, and follow the course of the Nahal Rebitha, which empties into the Sea of Galilee between Capernaum and Magedan.

"If there is not to come an unexpected change of governor or high priest," he said to Gaddiel, as they left the inn of Rama, "the land is mine, and the pleasure thine. Our rulers are too busy picking the gnats from their eyes, to look after the feet that run into perdition."

The morning of their departure from the blooming hedges of Gabara was delightful. Round about over the

¹ Temple Treasury.

narrow plains, as far as vision would strain, was spread a rosy veil, the reflexion in the sunlit air of the never ending hedges, clusters, and gardens of the wild rose, so abundant in the highlands of Galilee. The air was deliciously scented with its mild perfume; the sky was bright, blue, and clear, as the innocent eyes of a wakening child, and wide with the expanse of rejoicing that knows no bounds save the participation of the glad. The numerous hilltops bore as many softly tinted crowns of vines and ruddy and golden grapes. On the naked rocky cliffs in the distance stood, here and there, a solitary terebinth with drooping leaves and flowers, as in solemn meditation of the beauty of the day, and as a sober monitor of the frailty of beauty and the fleetness of bliss.

Now they passed out of the dell into the somber shades of the sycamores, vine-grown to the tops, some laden with the fruits of the wild gourd, some keeping loving watch over the tender myrtle bushes at their feet, others bending under the load of wild grapes nestling in their crowns and branches. The wild olive, the oleander, the tamarisk, willow and reed, palm and rock-rose, mastick and melon, poplar and pine, the mustard tree and the myrrh-thorn, kept them company in bewildering abundance and confusion. Verily, the lost traveler need not go hungry when there is such rich provision stored in the lap of the wilderness!

Soon they came upon a glen, walled in by a hedge of trees and shrubs so thickly crowded, and of such luxurious growth, that the boughs almost touched above and cast a cool shade over this luring prison. The sunlight shot across the gloom like a stream of fire and gold through the opening in the top of the natural canopy. The travelers stopped for a moment in silent wonder; but only to be roused from their meditation by the plaintive sound of a childish voice:

“Go ye hence — I am unclean — Peace be with you!”

Silas started and turned pale. Gaddiel peered curiously

into the far angles of this abode of living death. Weird suspicion lit up his strained gaze.

"It is Thamar," he said to his companion, "the maid of Miriam." Then he laid his left hand on the shoulder of Silas to direct his eyes, and pointed to the figure of a young girl, clad in white, and seated on a stone in the darkest nook of the glen.

Silas indicated with a nod of his head that he had discovered her, and struggling against an emotion so powerful that it elicited the curiosity of Gaddiel, called to her with faltering voice:

"Come hither, child, and be not afraid! Thine affliction will not bring us harm. Come hither, and tarry not!"

He dismounted and sat down in the grass. Gaddiel rode on a distance of thirty or forty paces, and dismounted also; he might as well rest his beast, and let it feed on the herbs so luscious and luxurious in this spot. But he did not sit down. Leaning with his back against a tree, he covered his mouth and nose with the end of his mantle and remained a silent witness to the scene about to be enacted. Silas, the pagan, might well ignore the legal prohibition; but he, a pious Jew, would not be defiled by contact with a leper!

But the strange conduct of Silas, his apparent tenderness, his overpowering emotion, even if only momentary, were a mystery to him. That captain of thieves and thugs had never evinced either embarrassment or emotion under the most trying circumstances, and here he pales before a child, and pours out to her his tenderness with the warmth of his heart's blood. What could prompt such interest and sympathy? He would surely learn a secret of his chief. Gaddiel called the robber his "chief" in his mind, inadvertently, with the intuitive conviction of his conscience, and was startled at this new discovery. It would be long ere he could live down his training in the school of his father. Conscious though he was of the justice of his spontaneous

confession, the conceit of the Pharisee would rise, like oil above water, over his conscience.

He still posed before himself as a son of Abraham, despite his sins and misfortunes.

When Silas sat down, the white figure arose and approached within ten feet of him. There she squatted, timidly facing the strange intruder upon her solitude and exile.

Silas addressed her with reverence:

"Be not afraid, child! I shall, mayhap, deliver thee, if thou wilt answer me truthfully. Thou art not a daughter of Judah?"

"I am an Egyptian by birth," she replied. The sound of her voice seemed to agitate him beyond control.

"How hast thou come hither into the land of the Jews?"

"My father deserted us many years ago, and when one day, last year, a merchant from Berothai brought us news that he had met my father in the house of a wealthy merchant at Sidon, my mother sold her house, and we came to Phenicia."

"Where is thy mother?"

"She died of fever shortly after the disappointment."

"Then you did not find the father?"

"Nay, he had disappeared without a trace."

"What is thy name?"

"My name is Thamar."

"But is this thy Egyptian name?"

"My Egyptian name is Callidora. My father gave it to me at my birth, because, he said," she smiled faintly, "I was the picture of my mother who was very kind and beautiful, and was herself named thus for her grace."

Silas did then not question more for a while, but silently stared into the darkness of the forest. His breast heaved, his fists were clenched, his eyes became bloodshot, and his face purple. He was warring desperately against a resolve

rising with triumphant force in his heart. The conflict must be fierce, for he appeared to be alternately on the verge of a violent outbreak of rage or tenderness. He sat rigid and crouched like a tiger preparing for the death leap upon his prey. Suddenly he sprang to his feet and ran towards his horse, when he reeled for an instant, and turning, leaped forward to the child, raised her to his face and kissed her passionately. "Calle¹ mine, my pet!" he cried aloud; "must this scourge be laid upon my child! I shall not leave thee more, my sweet one. I shall search out for thee the Healing Waters² of the Holy House, and cleanse thee, and nurse thee, and foster thee, as the birds foster their young, and thou shalt have the place of thy mother in my heart; for I will be a father unto thee — so hear my vow the God of Heaven!"

At the last words he raised her up in his hands above his head toward heaven, and then gently putting her down, led her to his beast. Before he seated her in the saddle, however, he cleansed her sores and bandaged them with fresh linen, and sprinkled a handful of a mixture of spikenard and myrrh over her garments, and anointed her hands and feet and her face and neck and hair with a precious ointment, which he poured from a crystal flask, drawn out of the trappings of his beast.

Thamar had never heard of the Healing Waters. Therefore, although so much overcome by astonishment and wonder at the discovery of her father, she expressed her joy and wonderment with some reserve, ever bearing in mind

¹ Pronounced *Kalleh*, the Greek plural of the noun "Kallos," meaning beauty, ornament, or grace.

² Aritstaeas, an eyewitness (lib. de LXX interpr.), tells us that there were in the Temple secret receptacles to catch the blood of the sacrificial victims, and wash it away in continuous flow. Also beneath the altar such receptacles were constructed which penetrated the Temple mount for several rods in all directions. Leaden pipes led to these all over the Temple to carry off the water used in purifications. (See Tyrius, Ezech. 47, note).

her resolve to ask of him an explanation of that mysterious source of salvation.

Silas turned to Gaddiel, who stood dumb and perplexed, and said to him:

“Go thine own way in peace, my son. This is evil company for a Jew. Keep my horse, it is thine. Fare thee well!”

Gaddiel bade them a brief farewell from the distance both of place and of reserve, and without a word of thanks for the generous gift departed in haste.

When they were alone, Silas did not appear eager to continue the journey immediately. He signified his change of intention to his daughter and lifted her from the horse, where he had placed her when he dismissed his companion. Callidora, as he now called her, nestled in his bosom as he sat down again, and after an affectionate look into his face inquired earnestly:

“Father, thou didst speak of Healing Waters in the House of God; I have never heard anyone say aught of them: wilt thou not tell me more?”

Silas himself had little faith in the power of the secret wells, which he had inspected some years before in the company of Sadok, the Pharisee, and leader of the Zealots in Sepphoris. If they were blessed with the power of healing, why did not the Jews make use of them for this purpose? But perhaps the priests, who alone knew their location, through jealousy concealed them from the people, as they wrapped the entire service of Jahveh in mystery and elaborate ceremony? The prophecy of Ezekiel is so plain: “Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house was toward the east, and the waters came down — and were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over, and it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth,

whithersoever the river shall come, shall live — for they shall be healed; and everything shall live whither the river cometh.”¹

But he clearly understood that his promise to search for the “Healing Waters,” of which he had hitherto had little thought, was the result of a momentary inspiration rather than of a well-seasoned resolution. Silas had not grown to manhood within the circle of the highest education of Judaism and paganism without breathing the atmosphere of the religious mysticism of the one, and the superstitious occultism of the other. Besides this, he had too much confidence in the precision of his own intellectual functions, to cast aside as useless an inspiration such as does come to the mind as much as to the heart in moments of intense emotion, when the very depths of the soul are stirred. Every man is a prophet in his day; every man peers into the impenetrable Beyond at least once in his life, even if it be only for an instant, and on the threshold of eternity.

As he pondered what response to make to the earnest request of his daughter, a new idea came upon him, like the dawn of morning out of the night. That inspiration about the secret wells beneath the altar of Jahveh became a conviction claiming instant attention, and clamoring as with a voice of brass. He heard the cry of the Prophet in the streets of the city nearly a thousand years before: “Therefore shall ye draw water with joy out of the wells of the Savior!”²

Who is the Savior? He alone could bless the waters of the Temple vaults; He alone could cleanse and heal!

With this new discovery lighting up his eyes, he raised his head slowly and solemnly and said to Callidora:

“There is running in the subterranean vaults of the House of Jahveh a vivifying stream, that is said to heal all the waters into which it is poured, and to preserve the life

¹ Ezek. 47, 1-5-9.

² Isaiah, 12, 3.

of them that drink therefrom. It descends into Siloam¹ and Bethesda² by secret channels, and purifies the waters of these pools, and brings to them life and health. If we may reach these pools, or climb down into the dark vaults beneath the Temple, thou shalt be cleansed. But the priests are vigilant, and thou art banned by their Law."

"But, father," she replied, "there are many lepers in Israel, and not one is cleansed by the sacred waters! Would the priests withhold their blessings from their brethren? I fear me, father, it is an idle hope. Let me remain in this drear solitude until the Savior come. I have reposed my hope of health and life in his kind bosom."

"The Savior!" Silas ejaculated, opening his eyes wide with astonishment at the identity of her thoughts and his own; "Isaiah speaketh wonders of the Savior."

"I saw him bless the sick and make them whole," the child continued; "I saw him turn water into wine; I heard him speak of God's exalted reign that is come upon us."

Silas was struck dumb with admiration of the enthusiasm with which she spoke. Her face seemed to him to be transfigured, and to assume the light and splendor of a star; her words were an oracle to him. "Hath she seen the Savior?" he questioned within himself; but she did not appear to be beside herself. Was her assertion not equally as well the result of her conviction, as of his own faith? The whole world was full of expectation of his advent. May he not come as the dew of the fields, the rain of the clouds, as the flower out of the root,³ as the Rising one from the Heights, suddenly besprinkling their hopes with his benediction, blooming in their midst, and shedding his light upon their expectations, appearing among them, sought, and yet not known?

"If thou hast seen the Salvation of God," he said at last, "thou shalt surely be cleansed."

¹ John, 9, 7.

² John, 5, 2.

³ Is. 45, 8; 11, 1; Ps. 96, 11.

"I have seen him, and touched the hem of his garment," she rejoined reverently, folding her hands over her breast; "he delivered me from the wrath of Simon, and the humiliation of his scourge in the streets of Jerusalem. I stood at his feet at the wedding feast of Cana, and heard his gracious words."

"Is it Jesus of Nazareth!" exclaimed her father.

"The same, father mine, the Prophet, and the Son of God."

Silas had heard of him, and knew that Judas, who had lately again associated himself to those bands of Zealots, whose chief object, like his own, was plunder instead of zeal for country and religion, followed the new Prophet now and then, uncertain as yet of his final decision, and the sincerity of his vocation.

This made it difficult for the chief to give his assent to the new information. How could the Prophet be ignorant of the vileness of this his disciple, and knowing it, how could he tolerate his companionship? Silas had a grudge against the man of Kerioth for having at his own risk deserted his post at Bethania the night of Gaddiel's attempted flight; and it surely was Judas who, later in the night, or toward morning, fell upon the young scapegrace on the road, and robbed and struck him.

This semi-pagan Jew entertained the same misgivings concerning the prudence of Jesus in selecting Judas for a disciple, as Miriam, the wayward Jewess. Judas was a stumbling-block to all that knew his character and career: and still the new Prophet had called him. Callidora, who knew him more intimately than any one, except Miriam, strangely enough did not allow her reverence for Jesus to suffer diminution through the presence of the unworthy disciple; but she also knew Jesus more intimately, especially through her converse with his mother, than anyone else outside the circle of his disciples. To her it seemed, that

he, who had not cast off the little stranger from Egypt, who embraced with equal love the fishermen of Capernaum and Bethsaida, and the pious Jews of high estate in Jerusalem,¹ and who upbraided the defilers of the Temple in the face of their avaricious superiors, while he rebuked only with sad silence the profligacy of her erstwhile mistress, must act upon motives so comprehensively sublime that they never actuated a heart but that of God. To her the vocation of Judas seemed a call to conversion, redemption, and grace, rather than to a station of honor and influence. Or is good wine bad because it is stored in earthen bottles? Or is gold become dross because it is fused with copper? The wine jug shares the fragrance of the wine, and the copper, the luster of the gold. Jesus was not dishonored, but Judas was honored by this unseemly selection.

Silas spoke with the sarcastic deliberation of the doubter, when he replied:

“Thou art mistaken, my child, about the Man of Nazareth. He calleth the Temple the house of his Father. The Temple is the house of God: therefore, he calleth God his father. But if God is his father, he maketh himself God. Let him do the works of God! He hath little prudence, for Judas is his choice of company, and rude fishermen. Wait; he will stir up the land from end to end, as did Judas of Gamala,² the Zealot, to make himself our King — and end on the gibbet of shame. Thou must seek thee a safer Savior. Nay, child; I will take thee home to Egypt, and will nurse thee there. Mayhap a pot of ancient wine of the Ka-n-Kemt³ hath greater healing powers than these Jewish Waters.”

So quickly had Silas put off the prophet’s mantle, assumed in his ecstasy of an hour ago, that now he fell to quipping.

¹ Nathanael, Lazarus, Martha, Nicodemus.

² Jos. Fl., *Jewish Antiquities*, lib. 18, 1.

³ “The Ghost of Egypt” — a vineyard at Thebes.

Callidora, who did not know of her father's present profession, and was happy in enjoying his caresses, noticed the change in his manner with deep sorrow. Child that she was for innocence and ignorance of the spiritual woe of desert souls, she could not understand that the dew drops of divine grace, drunk in with avidity, do not convert the arid sands into blooming gardens in a day. She attributed the change of mood in her father partly to his ignorance of the winsome graces of her Prophet, and partly also to his diffidence toward the boasted wealth of consolation and salvation in the Jewish worship. In this latter respect she was of the same mind. For although she had often been told since her infancy, by zealous proselytizing Jews, of the superiority of their race over all the nations of the earth by virtue of their being the only messengers of God's promises of salvation, and His own select portion, she had found neither more respectable men and women, nor greater immunity from the evils of this life, nor greater purity of heart, among them, than among the despised Gentiles. And what offended her most, the Jews degraded womanhood to such a vast extent that they would not deign to speak even to their own wives in public. Miriam had indeed broken through the barriers of masculine conceit and its shamming, but at the cost of her good name. She herself had learned to love their God, but found his adorers unworthy of Him. They seemed to her to be drawing Him down out of His heaven into the whirlpool of their own restless cravings and purposes, dis honoring His name and desecrating His sanctity by covering their own meanness with the cloak of his ordination, instead of endeavoring to rise up toward Him to be sanctified by His love. The only man whom she had found among them to express her ideal, as it had taken shape within her heart and mind in prayer and meditation of the revelation which she had been taught, was the Prophet of Nazareth. His humility and universal charity, his purity of life and his unremitting

and fearless zeal in teaching the humble ignorant, and in rebuking the opinionated leaders, were so much in accord with the picture of the Man after God's own heart which she had conceived in her mind, and with the pattern of the Just Man delineated in the Holy Books, that the contrast between him and the model Jew of the day, as held up in the Pharisee, was as evident to her as the sun in the firmament. Just such a stupendous deed as the miracle at the wedding, and such an earnest assertion of his divinity as the cry in the Temple: "The House of my Father!" were required to bring her down in adoration at his feet. She saw in him the Emmanuel, the Anointed of the Lord, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace, the Star of Jacob, and the Rising one in the Heights of the heavens.

Her father's scoffing, therefore, pained her to the quick. She answered him quietly, but earnestly:

"There is sweeter fragrance and milder strength in his voice than in the ancient wine of Thebes. From his lips flow milk and honey, and his hands are steeped in strong myrrh. Him will I pray to cleanse me. Let me await him here!"

As she was yet speaking, the silent hills around resounded with a long-drawn cry carrying her Jewish name, Thamar. On repetition, her father asked who might interest himself in her in this solitude in her misfortune. She confessed mid the maidenly blush of her face, that it was Rapha, her lover, the steward of the palace of Miriam of Magedan. Silas knew that Rapha was a worthy man, but wondered that he could preserve a sweet memory of a leper. "If he loves thee still," he said to her, "then he is not a Jew."

Callidora did not accept the proffer of this argument. But she thought that her father's opinion of the Jews, whom he knew, was very uncomplimentary. With her it was not the Jew, but his selfishness and stiff-neckedness, that deserved the fling. Would the Jew forget himself and adore

his God in spirit and in truth, paradise would reopen its golden portal and admit him to its bliss and peace.

Presently Rapha appeared at the edge of the glen, carrying a basket filled with choice fruit on his arm. At sight of the leper, whom the law forbade him to approach closely, he halted and deposited the basket in the path. His face expressed great surprise at the presence of the chief, and his familiarity with the ostracised maiden; for Callidora was reclining her head on the shoulder of her father, and had her left arm thrown around his neck. But there was no trace of jealousy in his features. Rapha understood at the moment that this picture of intimacy represented the only affection not open to the criticism and censure of its witnesses, the love of parent and child. But this unexpected discovery of her descent from a robber dismayed him; it did not occur to him to think that Silas had not always been associated with the lower elements that claimed fellowship with him at present. His love was wounded, and revolted with sore disappointment.

Could it be possible that such an angel of purity and comeliness, as Thamar was to him, was begot of a disreputable sire!

Silas felt the quick pulsations of his daughter's heart upon his breast, and drew her still closer unto himself, at the same time beckoning to the embarrassed swain to come near. But Rapha shook his head, and spread the fingers of both hands against them in protest against the violation of the law.

"If thou come not hither now, thou shalt not find time to say farewell, for I will take her away to Egypt," Silas cried to him.

Callidora pleadingly raised her eyes, but he only smiled down upon her with much kindness. The love for the child, for which he had hungered these many years, but which he had so long fed upon the husks of his questionable diver-

sions and operations, seemed to fill his cold heart with a gratifying warmth and to waken his nobler endowments to new life.

Rapha hesitated a little, but overcame his scruples at last, and anxiously looking about, as if he were afraid of the presence of witnesses to his transgression in this wilderness, quickly strode up to them, and set the basket at the feet of the maiden. The loathsome marks of her disease were concealed under bandages, and the sweet fragrance of the ointments not only banished any possible odor of decay, but even quickened his heart with a sense of gratification and comfort at her presence. He knelt down at her side, and asked her whether she were comfortable. She answered with a graceful nod of her head, and a look of grateful affection. Then he addressed himself to Silas:

"Wilt thou take my dove from me, chief, and fill my soul with bitterness and night? Let me nurse her until it may please the good God of Israel to have compassion with the strange nursling in his vineyard, and cleanse it, and graft it into the good vine. Do not remove the light from my path and the lamp from my sight; for she hath come upon me as the dawn of morn upon the mountain, and the glory of the sun upon the sea!"

Callidora's eyes sparkled with joy at the rapturous prayer of her lover. Her father also was moved at the passionate request, and began to relent in his heart.

"But," he said, "my dove is a stranger in the land; if I leave her here, no man will move a finger to heal her; if I take her to her childhood home, where I may procure rare remedies and the wine of the gods, she may live and thrive, and cast out the contagion from her blood, and my child shall be mine a second time by her regeneration. I have not warmed my heart at hers these ten years, Rapha!"

But Rapha replied sadly:

"Balsam and Galbanum will not cleanse her flesh, and

the wine of Segor and of Thebes will not regenerate her blood. The Lord God of Hosts hath touched her with His finger, and she must bide the relenting of His wrath!"

Now Callidora answered solemnly and with great decision:

"Neither hath the God of Israel struck me in wrath, for He doth not flare up like man against a worm, nor shall I go down into the grave in the morning of my life, and laden with living death: visiting He hath visited me that through sorrow I may be chastened to be made worthy of the brotherhood of His Anointed. I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Rapha was as much astonished at the earnestness and strangeness of her speech as had been Silas a little while before, and he said under his breath: "She speaketh of Jesus of Nazareth."

"Of him I speak, in truth!" she exclaimed; "he shall be my Salvation, and the Salvation of all the nations of the earth."

After this earnest testimony of her faith in the new Prophet, her father had not the heart to remove her against her will from the sphere of the Prophet's immediate influence. But it grieved him deeply to think that she must share the shelter of the wild beasts, and be wetted with the dew of heaven by night, and swelter in the heat of these dense woods by day, the object of the reproach, insult and loathing of every chance traveler who might seek the protection of the wilderness. These misgivings he expressed to Rapha, and on them his decision to comply with her ardent desire again faced wrecking. But Rapha had devised a plan so daring that it would have seemed preposterous but for conditions in his own limited domain peculiarly favorable. He would secrete the maiden in one of the watch-towers of the vineyards in his mistress's domain by the road of Tyre; and if anyone noticed the disappearance of the leper from the confines of Rama, he would tell him that her father had

taken her away to a strange land. Miriam was away from home and would not return for some weeks, and Omer, the Silent, seemed to be modeled after the pattern of watch-dogs. He had been dismissed at Callirrhoe for his "clumsiness," as he himself confessed to Rapha with a good-natured grin full of glee and satisfaction at his deliverance from surroundings where frivolity reigned, and luxury and lewdness were made the adornments of men and manners. Him would Rapha depute to guard the lone tower and its unfortunate prisoner. There he could provide comfort for her, and protection, and thence let her go out to the side of the highway if, perchance, her "redeemer" should pass by that road.

Silas consented to the plan, and Callidora was happy.

Rapha had tied his mule to a tree at the foot of the steep path that descends from the glen into the valley below. They made ready to go into camp until dark, and would then ride down together to Magedan by the Sea of Gennesar.

END OF BOOK FIRST





Book Second

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Book Second

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CHAPTER I

PREPARING THE SOIL

“ALONG the Sea of Gennesar extends a region of the same name, which is blest with wonderful fertility and beauty. The soil is so rich that it produces plants of every kind; and the inhabitants are indeed cultivating everything possible. The climate is so tempered that it seems to be arranged especially for the largest variety of products. Thus we find thriving here even a large number of nut trees, which, as is well known, prefer the colder zones, side by side with the blooming palm, that thrives only in tropical heat, in the company of fig trees and olives, which again demand a less fervid temperature: in short, one could call this region a rivalry of nature, which has here concentrated all its contrasts on a common field of struggle; an amicable contest of the several seasons, of which each, so to speak, would conquer the land for itself. For nature in this spot does not only bring forth, contrary to its general custom, the most widely different fruits, but it does also not even interrupt its work. Just the very finest of fruit, grapes and figs, it offers to the inhabitants uninterruptedly for ten months, and the other fruits in alternating maturity, even throughout the entire year. The mild atmosphere is assisted by an abundant spring which irrigates the country, and which the inhabitants call Capernaum.”¹

The cities of Julias, Hippo, Tarichæa, and Tiberias, and the towns of Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin, Magdala (or Magedan), Gerasa, Gamala, Bethmaus, and Bethar-

¹ Jewish War, III, 10, 8.

bel, were bedded in very bowers of bloom and green round about the *Mare Tiberiadis*, the Sea of Galilee in the “Gan-Sar,” or the “Prince’s Garden,” of Solomon. From this beautiful earthly Eden had the singer of the noble Canticle drawn the imagery of his divine love-song; here were the thousand vineyards in which the spouse glories, here the fragrant apples to whose scent he compares her breath, here the myrrh and spice of his bride-sister’s garden, here the fields of lilies among which he saw her walk, coy as the doe: here were spread with lavish profusion all the beauties of nature that gladden the heart, and scent as with the sweet breath of chaste love the sense of the poetic soul.

This blest region was chosen by Jesus of Nazareth as the principal scene of his labors. Its inhabitants were more susceptible to the new ideas with which he filled their minds; for they were comparatively free from the baneful rancor which was so destructive of the peace of their Judean countrymen. Happy and cheerful as the province which lavished upon them an abundance of meat and drink and love of life, they were averse to sinister moods, and as ready as their birds to sing and make merry. The trammels of the ceremonial law, as evolved from the servile and stupid interpretation of the law of Moses, which the Pharisees had often attempted to force upon them, did not curb the buoyancy of the Galilean spirit. The various pagan tribes, by which the province was surrounded, mixed in free intercourse with its inhabitants. The wealth of the country, the bustle in its many and important arteries of traffic, which carried Galilee out into the wide world, and brought the wide world back into Galilee, and the consequent spirit of confidence in themselves and of independence of every master, were calculated to exert over them a greater power of molding their minds, than the irksome prohibitions and the narrow ordinances, which, although hallowed by antiquity and the obedience of their fathers, they knew to be the device of an

age of religious revival,¹ strongly tainted with imprudent zeal and heartless fanaticism. This era was now happily passed; they were looking forward to the advent of the Great Prophet, and the era of redemption and peace. They respected, nay, even revered the Pharisees for the exactness of their religious observance, for their resignation to the infallible decrees of the God of Israel, and for their zeal for the national sanctuary and its hereditary form of worship:² but unlike the Judeans, who swore by the righteousness of the Pharisees, they respected them only in as far as each one also practised his professed belief, and made his actions the touchstone of his teachings. But still, the whole country, including liberty-loving Galilee, was so tightly held in the grasp of the Pharisee, that it would have been foolhardy for a common man to voice in public his disapproval even of the wickedness of individual members of the imperious sect. In public the Pharisees represented the cream of Jewry. All the offices of importance were filled by them, to the exclusion of every other aspirant, were he ever so worthy. If a Sadducee was elected to a position of honor or trust, he had to change his tenets, and join the Pharisees, in order to win or hold the respect of the people.³

The people in those days were so eager after safe direction in their groping after things spiritual that they accepted the Pharisees bag and baggage, and the Pharisees were so ready to supply the coveted comfort, that they imposed upon the people not only their teaching, but also, and principally, their personality. It was for this reason that Judea, where they reigned supreme, was paralyzed in every noble faculty, and that Galilee preserved an unconquerable distrust against them. The Judeans would blindly follow them, whithersoever they pointed the way, or would return to the way pointed out by them, if they had, perchance, followed an isolated noble impulse of their own conception. The Gali-

¹ After the second captivity.

² Jos. Fl., Antiq. 18, 1.

³ Ibid.

leans would not be led at all. They would go the way of the Pharisees as long as they were secure against deception; but when their leaders would restrain them from going whither their own lights led, they would stubbornly stop and refuse to go whither they were directed against their own will and judgment. For these reasons the Judeans had little regard for Galilee, and the Pharisees of both provinces for the Galilean Jew. But the Galileans made little of the snubbing. They felt that they were the stronger, if less ornamental, pillars of the Nation.

In their midst arose Jesus of Nazareth like a palm tree in full bloom among the humble mulberry trees in their valleys. He had been moved to leave Judea partly by the futility of his labors among the apathetic inhabitants, partly also by the supercilious airs assumed by the authorities toward his doctrine. The leaders had connived at the imprisonment of John the Baptist by Herod, for the same reason that they had given the cold shoulder to Jesus: because his teaching was opposed to their hypocrisy and self-justification.

When he had heard, therefore, that John's activity for the conversion of the perverse generation was at an end, he had called together the few men who had followed him from Galilee, and had led them back to their homes. He had made the imprisonment of John the signal for his collaborators to cease from an unprofitable campaign. He had done Judea and Jerusalem the honor and favor of his first invitation to usher in the Kingdom of the Messiah; he had declared himself, indirectly at least, as the Son of God, the Angel of the Covenant,¹ and had confirmed his declaration by signs, such as no man can work of his own power. But, strange to say, the leaders did no longer trouble themselves about him, either because they did not take him seriously, or because they were so much preoccupied with their own aims

¹ Malachy, 3, 1.

of delivering Israel from the dominion of the foreigner that a supposed pretender, who met with so little encouragement from the people, was thought to be incapable of doing harm; for before the people became alive to the significance of the New Revelation, and a religious revolution threatened in consequence, the leaders concerned themselves very little about what a man might teach, as long as he strictly observed the exterior forms of Jewish custom and worship. This was the fatal mistake of their policy. Take the rudder from a ship, and it may indeed sail its course in quiet waters; but let the storm blow up, and the vessel will surely be either wrecked on the rocks from which it cannot steer away, or be lost upon the turbulent waste: it does make a great difference what people believe.

The Judean populace, at the mercy of their proud and ambitious leaders, were ever drifting away farther and farther from the beacon that could guide them in any confusion, the spirit of their ancient faith, instead of which they learned to put their trust in the will-o'-the-wisps of the opinions of contending parties and schools, and, finding them all equally insufficient for safe guidance, at last discarded the ancient hopes of a spiritual rejuvenation of the people of God, and contented themselves with the possible realization of their dream of earthly happiness and glory. — Forty years after the appearance of their Savior among them, when even the husks of temporal aggrandizement were no longer within their reach, when their dream of a Royal Nation ended in the fearful reality of the spectacle of internecine strife, carried far beyond the limits of human sufferance, the helmless craft went to pieces from stem to stern, to be forever floating as wreckage on the tides of history. Only nations without well-ordered and well-grounded convictions can be led into ruin. But with no possession of the human heart has there ever been more toying at the hands of unscrupulous demagogues than with its religious

sentiment; and the ruin of both the seducers and the seduced has always been the result.

Jesus of Nazareth had given up as hopeless his first attack upon the blindness of the people of Judea, and upon the obstinacy of the Pharisees. There "the blind were leading the blind," and neither would give ear to the warning of "the watchman in the night." He would bide the time when the ring of his name would be carried loud and clear into Jerusalem by the winds from beyond the dominion of the "Murderess of the prophets," and when at least a few select souls would receive the seed of the glad tidings of the Savior. Meanwhile, however, he would go about sowing among the ingenuous children of Gan-Sar, the Prince's Garden, in truth;¹ for he came, the Messenger of the good tidings of peace.

He had allowed the men who had followed him, and were considered his disciples, to return to their respective homes and occupations, and taught the curious multitudes alone, now gathering them in the dells between the vine-clad hills, now lining them up on the shores of the lake, husbandmen, idlers, fishermen, and their wives and children. He healed their sick, comforted their mourners, and retrenched the exuberance of their levity with gentle rebuke and pointed parable. They flocked to him, surrounded him, flattered him, cheered him; the children sought his blessing hand, longed to snuggle against his breast, and fondly stroked his cheeks and beard: and his every word was consolation, his every touch a blessing. From morn to night the crowds would change, like the waters of a river, ever flowing on, and ever coming, so that the evening generally found him breathless and fatigued. Before the sun would gild the sky of the new day, they would seek him again, and find him in prayer. They began slowly to understand that he was in earnest about his task, that the end of all his solicitude was

¹ The "Prince of Peace"; *Isaiah*, 9, 6.

their spiritual uplifting, and that his blessings were only a gratuitous gift bestowed over and above the full measure of the heavenly bounty of his word. Large numbers, who had at first come curious, now came eager; and many who had sought deliverance from bodily ills found also the secret source of that spiritual regeneration which he preached, the spirit of repentance, in their souls. The sympathy which he had brought to them became mutual, and Jesus and his Galilean hearers were fast becoming friends.

One morning the concourse of eager listeners was overwhelmingly vast. He stood on the shore, preaching; but they pressed him so hard that his foot scarcely found space to stand upon. Some of his more intimate adherents from his first appearance at the lake shore, Simon and his brother Andrew, together with James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were returning from an unsuccessful fishing cruise, pulled their barges into the shallow water of the shore, and set themselves to washing the weeds and shells out of their nets. Still the people were crowding down upon him from the slopes dipping into the lake; and he stepped into Simon's boat and asked him to put off a little from the shore. His position, at the slight distance from his hearers where he was visible to all, facilitated the understanding of his instructions.

Simon sat at the helm, discouraged. Not even the gracious words of his Master could dispel the shadows from his brow. He was tired, too, and drowsy, and after several faint efforts at keeping awake he laid his head upon his bare arms and fell asleep.

When Jesus had finished his discourse, he called Andrew into the boat, and waking Simon from his slumber bade them launch out into the deep and cast out their nets. But Simon had little confidence in the success of the belated venture. The depths of the lake were stirred up, and the icily cold water of the bottom had driven the fishes from their accustomed haunts. Therefore he said:

"Master, we have toiled all the night, and taken nothing"; but mindful of the marvelous power of his Master, manifested at Cana first, and later so often in Judea, under his own eyes, he added with reawakening confidence: "Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net."

This implicit trust in the word of the Master was nothing short of an act of supernatural faith, in view of the fact that this time of day was the most unpropitious for fishing, and of the other, that the labors of the previous night, when ordinary conditions would have warranted the success of their diligence, had been wholly fruitless.

But the Master desired to reward the act of self-sacrifice of his disciple in steering the boat for him during the sermon. Their large drag-net was so heavy with their capture that they signaled to James and John, who had sailed after them in the other boat, to come and help them. When they drew out the net, it broke, and they filled both boats with fishes, so that they were in danger of sinking. When Simon saw this, he fell down and embraced the knees of Jesus, saying: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." But, Jesus lifting him up, said to him: "Simon, fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men!"

Simon knew in that hour that his Master was the Messiah, and felt that he owed his vocation to his mercy, not to his own deserts and parts. For his vocation was to be a participation in the Master's own labors, which were directed toward the regeneration of the people of Israel, the reestablishment of the royal throne of David, and the inauguration of the reign of justice and peace. But the thought that he was to be the associate of the Son of God in his divine labors was so stupendous that Simon could not grasp it then. It is one thing to believe in the supernatural, and another, to comprehend the reality of the truths proposed to the mind. The will must take part in the act of supernatural faith as much as the intellect, if not more, and Simon

had at that early period of his initiation into the mystery of the Messiah not yet learned to put away his personal ambitions, now growing the stronger for the new hope of their realization. How well did he learn later that it was easier to catch the dumb denizens of the deep in daylight, than the restless rebels against the divine ordinances of righteousness!

When, after an hour's absence, they returned to the shore with their boats burdened to sinking, their gratitude toward the kind Master, and their appreciation of the wonderful deed he had performed in their favor, received fresh impulse from the sight of the empty boats lying about the shallow bays and inlets of the shore. Not long before, their own boats had been moored among them, empty and soiled; but now they were returning in triumph, a short hour's labor having repaid them the unprofitable toil of a whole night.

The idlers, and the stragglers among the fishermen, who noticed the heavy gait of the returning craft, and surmised the cause, stood wondering and curious along the beach, like storks and herons eagerly watching the approach of their prey. They saw the still foaming waves dance and spit about the twain boats: so many witnesses of the lake's unabated fury and envy. How then has it given up so much of its store to these men, who were not more skilled and experienced than they themselves? The Lake had no secrets between Bethsaida and Tarichæa that were not known to every true fisherman; nor were there methods, not uniformly employed. Yet these boats were laden to the oarlocks!

Was that tall figure in white garments, with its serene countenance and quiet pose, reclining against the mast of Simon's boat, the author of this marvelous success? As the lucky fisherman came nearer, it appeared that it was the Prophet of Nazareth, the same that had, according to common report, changed water into wine at Cana, and that they

had seen purifying the Temple, and healing the sick in their own midst; another of the wonderful deeds of the Man of God! And their astonishment was resolved into a feeling of reverence and awe. When the boats were tied up, and Jesus descended, the spectators crowded about him, and reverently and joyfully kissed his hands and the hem of his garment.

Among the spectators was one who had stood aloof from the several groups, dejected and sad. He was a man of magnificent stature, and to all appearances lacked neither refinement of manners nor mental training. He was surely neither fisherman nor Galilean.¹ The few words which he had spoken in response to a casual salute from an admiring passer-by bespoke his descent from the bold Judeans of the border towns of Idumea. He watched every movement of the Prophet, and seemed to long to speak to him, but to be afraid.

Simon and his companions disposed of their booty to their relatives, who had arrived early, and bidding them farewell, followed Jesus, who stood awaiting the end of their leave-taking. Then they walked away together, passing the expectant looker-on without notice. He followed them at a short distance, and when they sat down in the shade of a cluster of sycamores and began to prepare their meal, he stood at the edge, silently and hungrily watching them. Simon, who had been busy conversing with the Master, now returned to his companions; the Master had fallen on his knees in prayer, turning his face away from them. Simon then for the first time noticed the intruder. He recognized him instantly, as he had recognized him at the landing place, but had expected Jesus to address him. Deferring then to the evident reluctance of the Master, who also must have seen him, he had suppressed the impulse of saluting him.

¹ The Galileans did not sound the gutturals.

But now he approached him: "Why art thou sad?" he questioned; "and why, dost think, has the Master refused to call thee, and to speak to thee? Art thou become a stranger to us? Where hast thou been these many days since the last Pasch?

"Hath the Master shown solicitude about my absence?"

Simon shook his shaggy head: "But once, when I spoke to him of thee, his eyes filled with tears of compassionate sadness."

"Dost think he will receive me back? I am a poor man now, Simon, as poor as himself and thou. I have sold all my belongings, and was on the way to the ruler of the synagogue of Capernaum to deposit the proceeds of my transactions in the treasury of the widows, when I was robbed by Silas, the chief of thieves, of all my wealth: and it was no pittance of a beggar. The robber fell upon me in the night, under the bridge of Meddor where I had hid for refuge and rest. He was not alone; but albe I suspect the son of Simon Bar Jehu of complicity in the misdeed, it was too dark beneath the vault to discern his features. The chief I know —." He hesitated in momentary confusion. Simon encouraged him:

"Proceed, proceed! How knowest thou the chief?" And there lurked vigilant suspicion in the corners of Simon's eyes.

Judas — for it was he — proceeded calmly, but with visible circumspection:

"I met him often when I was a member of the Zealots in the mountains. But I did not know of his weird propensities. Speak kindly of me, Simon, to the Master!"

Simon scratched his head, and looked dubious.

"Come, and sit down with us to eat," he said at last; "he will not refuse thee a morsel of our feast, and mayhap thou wilt find grace again in his sight. Thou dost truly seem to be straightened with misfortune." And he took Judas by the arm and led him to the fire, where fishes were

broiling and roasting, and a little bread was broken for each one of the original party of five. Simon broke his portion in two, and gave one half to his new guest.

At that moment the Master approached. His face shone with the radiance of supreme peace and recollection. At seeing Judas, his features remained unmoved. Simon watched him, and looked up at him with mistrustful entreaty in his eyes.

Jesus sat down on the ground beside Judas, and addressed him:

"How hast thou come hither, Judas, without being bidden? Thou hast let thy covetousness come in between my call and thy obedience. Now art thou poor, but not in spirit. Take heed, lest love of money prove thy ruin!"

Judas arose, filled with anger and terror at the rebuke. But he was absolute master of his emotions, and possessed consummate skill in governing them. His anger flashed out of his eyes only for a brief moment, like a flash of lightning, to disappear without a trace. Simon expected him to rise, raise his hand to heaven, and curse the Master; but he was mistaken. Whatever may have been the first impulse of his passionate soul, Judas threw himself at the feet of Jesus, a suppliant for mercy, a self-confessed miscreant, who craved forgiveness as a boon, not as deserts. And Jesus bade him: "Arise!" and when Judas had raised himself on his knees and lifted up his bloodshot eyes, he added: "And mend thy ways!" But he neither extended to him a formal invitation to further discipleship nor gave him an explicit assurance of forgiveness, so that Simon and the others with him were astonished at the exceptional severity of the Master.

After the meal they departed together on the road towards Capernaum.



CHAPTER II

FAREWELL

“MACHÆRUS, one of the four great fortresses put in excellent repair by Herod the Great, was a wonder of construction. It rose, seemingly in defiance of nature, with chambers of marvelous beauty, beneath which were dungeons, and inexhaustible cisterns cut in the solid rock. There was a wonderful view from the top of its towers. To the south could be seen the outlines of the Dead Sea, with Engaddi and Hebron; to the northwest of these, the hills of Judea with Jerusalem could be distinguished, with the Palace of Herod, and the Temple, overlooked by the enormous Tower of Antonia. To the right lay Jericho with its evergreen forest of palm trees; then the blue-gray Jordan could be seen threading the plain. But this fortress had not been erected for the beauty of its distant prospect; it stood in the midst of a wild and dreary region, on the borders of the Arabian desert — a challenge to the wild and restless tribes.”¹

In one of its dungeons was confined in those days John the Baptist.² Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee, had provoked Hareth, the king of the Arabs, to anger and revenge, by divorcing his wife, who was the daughter of Hareth. Anticipating her disgrace in the adulterous intercourse of her liege-lord with Herodias, the wife of his own half-brother Philip, still living, she asked permission of the unsuspecting Herod to betake herself to the fortress Machærus, which stood guard over the boundaries between the

¹ E. Latimer, *Judea, etc.*, p. 233.

² Jew. Ant. XVIII, 5, 2.

countries of the two rulers. She had been secretly warned of Herod's intentions against her, while he had been sojourning in Rome, and had sent messengers to her father's sheikhs advising them of her resolve of deserting her disloyal husband, so that he could at least not execute his shameful plot in her presence.¹

She had scarcely departed, when Herod publicly received Herodias into his house, and divorced the daughter of Hareth. The offended father-in-law prepared for war. Herod was obliged to march his army to the front; taking the route down the coast of the Great Sea, and rounding the southern end of the Dead Sea, he pitched his tents about the impregnable fortress.

John was then preaching and baptizing, and attracting great crowds not far from the fortress, in the vicinity of Enon. Herod sent for him in the hours of enforced idleness, and gladly heard him. He also went out to him, and was astonished at the power which he wielded over the immense multitudes that hung on his lips. But on several occasions John reproved him, saying: "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." Herod was afraid of the judgments that John threatened against him; for he knew that John was a just and holy man. But when he confided his misgivings to Herodias, she persuaded him to send out and arrest the unwelcome censor.

Herod's character was that of a weakling; it was not proof against either the flattery or the pouting of this crafty woman. Later, this weakness, played upon by this woman for her unmeasured jealousy of seeing her own brother made king, while her "husband" lazily contented himself with the beggarly Tetrarchy, proved his ruin.²

John, therefore, was taken into custody. Herodias bore him such undying hatred that she frequently undertook to obtain Herod's consent to the killing of the prisoner. But

¹ Jew. Ant. XVIII, 5, 1.

² Ibid. XVIII, 7.

in this delicate matter Herod's fears were stronger than the fury of Herodias. He parried her pleadings with the assurance that thenceforth she was secure from John's rebuke, and with the apprehension of a revolt among the people, if John should be killed. Herodias, however, would not be placated. She would watch her opportunity, and wrest the condemnation from the ruler at one of the unguarded moments, of which there was no dearth in Herod's life.

Hareth prepared for the encounter with great deliberation. At one time Herod, who began to pine for the beauty of the gardens of Gennesar, and the distractions of the theater and circus of Tiberias, imagined that his disgraced father-in-law had given up the plan of revenge. But within a few days his scouts brought in the news of the continued massing of troops and wagons about the capital of the enemy; and Herod had to remain.

For a diversion, he went down to Callirrhoe, to drink the waters of that celebrated health resort, and renew the vigor of his body in the life-giving baths. His dying father had been brought thither about thirty years before, and the use of these baths had stayed the hand of death for a few weeks and had relieved his excruciating pains.

But Callirrhoe was not only a refuge for the sick and decrepit, but also the pleasure resort of the most beautiful women and the debauching gilded youth of the Orientalized Greeks and Romans. Besides this wholly pagan contingent of its guests it harbored the usual crowds of worthless hangers-on who follow in the train of wealth and luxury with the assiduity of flies in the wake of decay. But also considerable numbers of lax Jews, men and women, contributed a spicy sprinkling to the promiscuous crowds.

Herod had left Machærus very early in the morning, before dawn, and arrived at daybreak, when the baths were still crowded, partly with the drunken revelers of the receding night, and partly with the resurrected wrecks of the previous

day, all with one accord acting an indescribable orgy. That morning in particular was a red-letter day in the perpetual calendar of festivities; it was the birthday of Tiberius Cæsar, and Herod had chosen it for his visit in anticipation of the unbridled excesses which he hoped to witness, and, as much as might lie in him and his courtiers, to multiply and enhance.

The place seemed the very abode of the demons of hell. Entire pools were choked with the ruddy flesh of the bathers. Shreds of the garments, that had been donned at a time when at least a spark of reason had enlightened the confused heads, were seen floating about, and the play of the men was so nearly as rude as that of unreasoning brutes, that it was difficult for the spectator to decide whether they were engaged in a fray or in a frolic. It was a sight to mock the wisdom of a pagan.

Under the peristyle of the baths moved a pair of lovers; the maiden betrayed signs of great aversion in the deep flush of her face. She was elegantly and richly attired, while her lover had already donned the scant robes worn in the steaming basins, and eagerly sought to persuade his companion also to make ready, and dip with him into the warm flood. But she persistently declined, and replied to his last attack: "I will not so degrade myself as to mingle with these swine: the woman who descends among these maniacs deserves to be burnt with the fire and brimstone of Sodom and Gomorrha. Go, Gaddiel, and vest thyself; these sights sicken me!"

"Bid me die for thee, Miriam," he protested, "and I shall die; but where is thy love for me?"

Miriam stood still on the brim of the large marble basin, which they had reached, and pointing down with her finger at the abomination in the pool, said with a voice trembling with indignation: "Spring down, Gaddiel; spring down — and seek thy love at the bottom of this rottenness! Farewell!" And she turned on her heels, leaving the emasculated

sop to disengage himself from the coils of the insane fury which had taken possession of him.

Miriam left the baths in such confusion and haste that she did not notice the approach of Herod with his courtiers. The loud laughter and the filthy language that heralded his coming from afar was these last days so usual a signal of the arrival of new guests that it excited no curiosity. She would have passed the gay company without looking up, had not one of the officers in advance of the Tetrarch shouted back at him:

“Behold our good neighbor!” and impudently pinching her cheek added: “The Rose of Gan-Sar.”

Miriam was angered at the license which the man was taking with her in public, and looked up at him with flashing eyes. From the day that the Pharisee had coupled the ancient name of her estate with the opprobrious epithet which imported a disgrace of which she had not made herself guilty, she had not overcome the fear of a repetition of that scene. She changed color, and stood riveted to the spot, anger and hate distorting her features.

But Herod, when he had come near, and read the exasperation in her face, bowed to her most graciously, and daintily taking the sleeve of her mantle between his fingers, kissed its border.

“Happily met, by the gods!” he exclaimed, with a masterly effort suppressing his anxiety at the prospect of a rebuff from the offended damsel; “my greeting to the Princess of Gennesar!”

“All hail to the Tetrarch!” she answered the compliment, softening a little; “but teach thy soldiers, pray, to respect a princess!”

“The field and the camp, good Lady mine!” he said, laughing heartily at the dejection of the officer thus rebuked. “Would the Princess of Gennesar do me the honor of celebrating with me at the fortress my birthday?”

"The princess bears the Tetrarch no ill will for the rudeness of his soldiers." She purposely avoided giving the officer his title.

Miriam had heard the reports of the splendor and vivacity of Herod's feasting at the fortress, and therefore gladly accepted the honor of the invitation, especially as the offending officer humbly craved her pardon before they resumed their promenade toward the noisy baths.

But when she was out of hearing, he remarked sarcastically to Herod:

"Who would mistake her for a whimpering maiden!" And Herod, who had a personal experience of her distaste of meanness, suggested to him for enlightenment:

"She may be wild and wicked; but withal she is a princess."



CHAPTER III

FEARFUL FEASTING

GADDIEL had arrived at Callirrhoe only about a fortnight before. That morning, when he left Silas with his stricken daughter, he journeyed on to Magedan, and finding that Miriam had departed, and fled to the famous baths, resolved there to present himself to her in the most acceptable manner. For this purpose he must look for money. He sought Silas again; together they prowled about highways and byways for several weeks with scant success, until they scented the tracks of Judas. They watched his sales of orchards and fields, and when he had garnered all his profits, they waylaid him at the bridge of Meddor, and relieved him of several purses of gold as fat as suckling pigs. After making an equable division of the spoils, Gaddiel hastened to Callirrhoe, where he appeared with the *hauteur* of a Roman legate.

Miriam at first refused to receive him. But when she learned that he was disowned by his father and that, therefore, her fiendish plans had succeeded, she threw herself into his arms without even the reserve of the respect due to the public. From that day her conduct was so erratic that many maintained she was possessed by seven demons, and that one day an officer of Herod's army, a renegade Jew, called her, in a cruel jest, the reincarnation of seven *fiery serpents*¹ at once. Gaddiel was suffering the torments of jealousy, of envy, of humiliation, and of alternate exultation and despair to the extreme of insanity. But as often

¹ Numbers, 21, 6.

as his idol celebrated a new triumph in yoking another fool to her chariot, so often she returned to him, as loving as a dove and as true as the morning, to parade him again before the eyes of his jealous rivals. For this torment, her caresses were a thorny embrace about his heart. She was so selfish and stingy with her favors that he felt as sheepish as a boy discovered at his first love-making, as often as she pertly interrupted the tender effusions of his lusting heart. Hence, before Herod's birthday came, he had disappeared.

She assumed a very ungracious mood at the discovery of his unceremonious absconding. There were many men of noble blood who would have felt honored by the favor of her company, but she would reject every offer from men. She would bid her maid Hannah come with her. The ruler might not desire the company of a man not invited, but to her maid he must extend the compliments of hospitality.

The celebration of the Tetrarch's birthday began with the evening preceding the feast-day. It was an imitation, true to nature, of the wildest pagan Bacchanalia. Toward morning, the sumptuously appointed chambers of the grim fortress were filled with drunken men and women. But when they recovered themselves sufficiently with the aid of emetics and tonics, the rioting was resumed, and others would be laid by to sleep off their stupor. A general cessation of the revolting debauch became imperative about the middle of the forenoon, partly on account of the heat, and partly on account of the inability of the king and his guests to realize the joys of the feast.

It was not customary among the Jews to sit down to table in public with women. The Jews had so little respect for womanhood that on occasions of festive repasts, even when celebrated at their own fireside, the women would be obliged to enjoy themselves as best they might, in a separate hall.

But Herod, although a scrupulous observer of the national

ceremonial on national feasts, set aside all scruples when within the walls of his own city of Tiberias, or of one of his palaces. When the great banquet was begun, towards evening, the couches about the tables were occupied by men and women in groups arranged at the dictates of sportive fancy.

Singers, minstrels, dancers, and professional jesters, well supplied with fragrant wine and dainty morsels from the rich table, furnished the chief entertainment. Herod and his courtiers and captains, together with the beautiful and complaisant women, readily surrendered themselves to the seductive charms of this contest of beauty and luxury with wit and buffoonery. Soon all barriers of propriety were again broken down, and unbounded licentiousness reigned supreme.

Herodias, the mistress of the house, had long before withdrawn from the scene. She would not risk the insulting twitting of her lord, who always lost control of his tongue first when in his cups. On the occasion of a banquet in his palace at Tiberias, not long before, he had committed a most unpardonable indiscretion against her own brother, the proud Agrippa. This toy of fortune, now a king by the grace of the Emperor, had then been in poverty, and had enjoyed the hospitality of Herod. The latter had jokingly pointed him out to his guests as the "royal beggar."¹

She feared that he might allude to her disgraceful position as "the wife of two and the widow of neither," repeating in jest the stern rebuke administered by John the Baptist.

She remained in her own chambers, and spent the time nursing her hatred of the rude preacher, and instilling it into her daughter Salome, whom she was dressing up for the dance which Herod begged her to perform for the entertainment of his guests and the honor of his feast-day.

Salome was a beautiful damsel of fourteen years. She

¹ Jewish Antiquities, XVIII, 6, 2.

united in herself all the bodily grace of the Herodian family, from the first Idumean down to her own beautiful mother, with the rosy freshness of the springtime of maidenhood.

Her mother would not commit so important a factor of her anticipated triumph, as was the dressing up of Salome, to the hands of anyone, not excepting even her experienced Egyptian bondmaid, Salome's nurse and governess. She took charge of it in person, and during the fatiguing ceremony instructed the wily artist in the secrets of such insidious flattery, as would, without doubt, win Herod from his obstinacy in the matter of John the Baptist's removal.

"It is the first time," she suggested, "that thy new father has expressed a desire to grace his feast with thy art as a token of his paternal favor. Spare not thy cunning, as thou lovest me! For I have a tender wish at heart, which I would fain have gratified. If he offer to requite thee at the banquet, do not grasp at promises of wealth, but return to me, and I shall counsel thee aright; a grace won at wine is worth a thousand promises. Hearst, child? Consult thy mother ere thou take a gift! And do affect some injury at the straightness of his breast, if he offer thee less than half his kingdom!"

Early in the evening the Tetrarch's announcement, that now she was expected to grace the feast with an exhibition of her art, was delivered, and Salome reviewed her charms for the last time in the large mirror of her mother's cabinet. But before she followed the page she whispered into her mother's ear: "I shall not be prudish when I ask my reward!"

At her entrance, as she coquettishly tripped down the aisle, she was received with shouts of delight. She bowed with exquisite grace before the host, and forthwith sprang upon the table where he reclined, and where she was exhibited to the expectant gaze of all the guests. The art which she immediately began to display, was a marvelous

exhibition of the nimbleness of body, and of the abandon of mind, for which the Grecian dancing-girls were famed; but the perfect beauty of Salome's form enhanced the delusiveness of her performance far beyond the measure of that of the public dancers.

Her grace, her skill, her unmistakable craft, fascinated her admirers so much that their rapture seemed to take away their breath. When she moderated the pace of her graceful and crafty gyrations, she steadied herself on both feet, and went through a series of rhythmic motions, now swaying the body to and fro on the tips of her sandals, and again, from the hips, or moving her feet and arms and hands with pretty grace, to the music of the minstrels.

Suddenly she stopped at a pause of the music and, poising her beautiful figure on the toes of one foot, flung out her arms at both sides, holding the hem of her skirt in either hand, so that she appeared like a butterfly about to alight, and sprang from the middle of the table straight into the open arms of her "stepfather."

The applause, held up for an instant by the surprise of this unexpected finish of her feats, burst forth with the vehemence of thunder. Everyone sprang to his feet, and pressed as close as possible towards and around the couch of Herod, some even recklessly vaulting over tables and couches.

The Tetrarch submitted to the ardent caressing of the artful girl in speechless wonder. The last trace of his reserve, none too solid at any time, and least under the blandishments of the fragrant cup, was visibly melting away, and left his face a staring blank, to be written over with the grim characters of the first impulse that would take possession.

Miriam, who occupied a position directly opposite the host, had as frankly as anyone admired the child-dancer's art and charms; but now when she, the nearest witness of this degrading spectacle, perceived the cold, serpent-like

gleam of sin in the eyes of the well-turned maiden, she shuddered.

Had not, perhaps, such unblushing guile also disfigured her own countenance, when she acted the deceit of sin against Gaddiel? The depths of her soul revolted against the thought. She would not have exchanged her beauty for perversity at any profit, had she known that sin imprints such revolting brutishness upon the face of the evil-doer!

Now the Tetrarch nicely loosened the hands of Salome, and holding her out at arm's length, cried at her, as his features were enlivened with the grin of the fool:

"Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. I swear it by the memory of my father, and by the name of the God of Israel: Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom."

The damsel gleefully clapped her hands, and slipping away, went out to consult with her mother. When she returned, and stood before Herod, planting her feet wide apart with a ludicrous assumption of dignity, she held up a silver laver before him, and said, amid intense silence:

"I will that thou give me forthwith the head of John the Baptist, in this charger!"

Herod turned pale, and a murmur of stupid amazement ran through the hall. But he had pledged himself with an oath before so many witnesses, who, although horrified for the moment at this grawsome ending of the feast, nevertheless would upbraid him later for his cowardice, should he reject her petition. Therefore he despatched one of the captains to the dungeon beneath the festive hall, to decapitate the Prophet of the Jordan.

During the short pause of the executioner's absence, comments and opinions were exchanged among the guests in suppressed tones, heavy with the horror of the sight which they anticipated. The damsel noticed the complete revolution of the festive joy to sepulchral gloom and silence, which

was chilling everyone, even the craven on the royal couch. Her own hair crept on her head; she stood stiff and numb, and the muscles of her arms and cheeks twitched under the tension of her fear and the coldness of her disenchantment. The cruelty of the demand made in the fervor and glow of riotous merriment was becoming so obvious by the sudden sobriety of the whole company that it stood out against the merry mood of a moment ago like a blotch of blood on the garments of a bride. Soon her embarrassment overwhelmed her, child that she was despite the corruption surrounding her from the cradle, so that she burst into tears, and anxiously looked to Herod for a sign of encouragement, or a word of comfort.

Miriam was deathly pale. Her intoxication of head and heart had disappeared. She realized now, at the very bottom of the delights into which she had so readily cast herself, that "concupiscence begetteth sin, and sin, having been consummated, bringeth forth death." Besides the rebellion surging wildly in her soul, she stood so much in dread of death, that the prospect of presently coming in such close contact with it as to be obliged to look upon its ghastly trophy freshly acquired, brought her to the verge of frenzy. The pity for the weeping maid was a slight relief, at least as a momentary distraction, from the agony of her mind. She was about to arise and offer Salome the cheer of her embrace — for Herod was too much dismayed to perceive the fright of the bewildered maiden — when the captain came down the hall with the head of the luckless prisoner wrapt in a blood-stained coat of the jailer. Salome dropped the charger on the floor at his approach. Presently he opened the ghastly bundle, and shook the bleeding head out into the dish at the damsels' feet.

Miriam uttered a shriek, and fell back half dead. The hall was swiftly being deserted by the women; the men, however, had so far recovered from the shock of the outrageous

command that the sight of the head of him who had so mercilessly scourged their vices, caused them little pain and less pity.

Salome would at first not touch the dish with the fresh fruit of death. But seeing her mother approach hurriedly and with glistening eyes, she took it up with a desperate grasp, and running a few steps to meet her, placed it in her hands, immediately wiping her own hands on the costly skirt in which she had, a little while before, displayed her sinful art.

The banquet was over. The men remained for a while longer, endeavoring to summon the merry mood from its precipitate flight; but the Tetrarch's face wore a forbidding frown and scowl, and his voice bristled with irritation; hence they departed singly and in groups, the captains to their quarters in the camp, and the courtiers to the upper chambers of the fortress. Miriam, who was stunned and dazed, was placed in the care of one of the Galilean officials, who knew her intimately, to be conducted back to her lodgings at Callirhoe.

Salome raved all night, and developed symptoms of a severe illness. Herodias, the real instigator of the unwarrantable murder of the prophet, divided her time between the care for her sick child, and the gloating over the victim of her hatred. She often drew out the tongue from the bleeding head and pierced it with a needle a hundred times, to be revenged for the rebukes which it had pronounced against her sinful relations with the brother of her husband.



CHAPTER IV

CONFIRMED DISGRACE

WHEN Gaddiel Ben Simon left Callirrhoe, he had not made any definite plans, and felt little inclined to think of the future. He had only one thought with which to torture his mind: he had lived out his life. For two years he had been yearning and sighing after the full possession of the woman whom he loved with what had seemed to him an insatiable love, an inexhaustible source of sweetest delight. But the rare sips from the enchanted cup offered with an ill grace had disillusioned him. There was no peace in his breast, and no satiety in his flesh. He was maddened with envy at the memory of his untiring but profitless hunt after the elusive nymph. He was unspeakably wretched; Miriam had deceived him.

Had he thrown away his father's love, his wealth and estate, and his self-respect — bitterest of all sacrifices! — and come out of this enthralment, only to find that the reality meant ruin beyond repair! Why had he not given the issue of this rebellion against sense a thought before it was too late to mend! Now it was too late; he had leaped over the brink, and was plunged in darkness, and cut off from the beautiful world overhead: at least he could not discover a path that would lead him back to the society of respectable men, to the bosom of his father, to his seat of honor in the synagogue, to the circle of the companions of his childhood and early youth. He had become a castaway — more so than the poor little leper of Rama.

What was it that gave her the courage to expect redemption? Ah, her trust in Jahveh, the God, his own God and

his father's, whom she scarcely knew! But no; let me see! She is awaiting a Mediator between Jahveh and herself, the Prophet, whom she calls the Son of God. Oh, were it true! I would cast myself at his feet and crave his forgiveness! But he could not accept my face — I have cast my God behind me!

Such thoughts of despair were his daily meat during his long and hard journey homeward. Why he was wandering back towards the scenes of his earlier happiness, he did not even stop to consider. He simply longed for relief and encouragement such as he had found nowhere since he deserted his home and the haunts of his boyhood. Whither else would he turn, and not be strange?

But on the morning when he took passage for Capernaum from Hippos, and beheld the beautiful city of his birth peeping out from the groves and arbors of the opposite shore, he knew that the secret hope of an impossible reconciliation with his father first, and then with his God, had been the light luring him homeward. His heart warmed and swelled up as with hot tears, which he must suppress, the strangest of the strangers in his own land and home. He struggled with emotion to maintain at least sufficient presence of mind to answer the curious questions of the sailors, or to evade them with so much skill that they would not learn his sad secret. And indeed, after several unsuccessful attempts to draw from him what he was evidently unwilling to communicate, the sailors ignored him during the rest of the journey, and set to discussing the principal topic of the day, the impending war with the Arabs. But these men did not take sufficient interest in the troubles of Herod to lend either color to their approbation, or point to their condemnation.

When, however, one of their number, who had only the night before returned from Gennesar, asked whether anyone of them knew Judah Ben Nahash,¹ the man who had

¹ "Son of the Serpent;" an unkind allusion to his lameness.

been suffering with the palsy for many years, they all shouted: "Ay! — Why dost thou say that he *was* sick?"

"Because he is healed." They looked at him incredulously, but one answered:

"Tell us how he was healed, that we may understand." And another: "Judah has been halt so long that I scarcely remember him standing on his feet; and he has swallowed medicine enough to flood the Jordan, and has received treatment enough to kill an ox of Lebanon. Go to, Joseph; thou dost prevaricate!"

But Joseph persisted: "Had I not seen it with mine own eyes, neither would I believe it; and it was done so easily! like bidding the sun set at even-tide."

"That is easy in truth!" laughed one; "yet the sun setteth as it riseth in the hand of Him who set it in the firmament of heaven in the beginning," he added reflectively.

Then the chief speaker described the wonderful cure: "Yesterday toward noon we were loitering about the harbor near Simon the fisherman's house, where a crowd was gathered to hear the new Prophet of Nazareth. We could not hear much of his sermon; the crowd was thickly packed, and so deep that it was impossible to go near him.

"Presently we heard men shouting and arguing in the rear of the house. They pressed upon the crowd, but could not penetrate the immovable masses. When we saw the commotion, we ran around the edge of the crowd, and came upon four men bearing Judah Ben Nahash upon a cot. Not finding space to reach the Prophet even at the door, they ascended to the roof, and raised the palsied man up after themselves, several of us assisting from below. I climbed up after them to see what would be the outcome of this bold undertaking; for they said that the Prophet would surely heal him.

"They opened the roof above the head of the Prophet, removing the thatch, and after fastening the ends of four

ropes here and there to the cot, lowered Judah through the opening to the feet of Jesus. ‘Have compassion, Master,’ they prayed, ‘for we know that thou canst heal him!’

“He stopped, and looked with kindly eyes upon the stricken man. The Scribes, who had been standing about the door, drew nigh, and watched him very closely. The people also were now crowding the balustrade from all sides, and were taken aback at the audacity of the friends of the sick man. But Jesus said to him: ‘Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.’

“You should have seen the horror of the Scribes at those words! But he turned to them with a quiet smile and said: ‘What think you: is it easier to say to this man, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say: Arise, and take up thy bed and walk? But know ye, that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins!’ And turning to Judah Ben Nahash, he bade him arise, take his bed, and go into his house. And the sick man arose whole, immediately, and after adoring him, went forth glorifying God with all the astounded witnesses of his cure.

“The Scribes walked before him through the crowd, cursing him, and commanding him to hold his peace. But the people rejoiced that Judah had been healed, and raised a loud cry about him, saying: ‘Glory to God, who hath given such power to man! Verily we have never before seen this done in such a manner!’

“I myself sprang down from the roof and kissed the hem of the garment of this great Prophet.”

The sailors had listened with bated breath. Their interest had become so intense that they could at first not find words to express their admiration. But now as they passed another craft bound in the opposite direction, they shouted together, and Gaddiel with them: “Blest be the name of the Lord!” And the sailors in the other boat threw up their arms, and cried out: “And blest is he that is come in His name!”

"Their praise is of Jesus of Nazareth," Joseph commented; and they all shouted the response after the receding admirers of the new Prophet: "Blest be the Great Prophet of God!" The rest of the journey over the placid lake was passed in discussing the wonderful deed, expressing amazement, doubt, belief, veneration, and, tentatively, the hope that the Messiah might be in their midst. How they would rally around him, and conduct him in triumph to Jerusalem, and place him on the throne of David, as soon as he would proclaim the advent of his reign!

Gaddiel had paid his ferriage with his last *bekah*,¹ and had received only a few Gadarene farthings² in change. He landed within sight of his father's house, a beggar. But he would not venture near it. His father had cursed him, and the curse sealed his rejection. He would go to visit — ay, but by this time his rejection had been published far and wide among the friends of his father; and those who would keep faith with Simon must disown Gaddiel.

He shambled along discouraged toward the tollgate, holding one of his last copper coins between his fingers to pay his entrance. Just as he entered the archway, he saw the new Prophet come in at the other opening. Crouchingly he shrank back, and hid behind a pillar. But the next moment he bethought himself, that he had nothing to do with the Man, and came forth, meeting him face to face at the booth of the receiver of the toll.

Jesus looked at the official through the grating which separated him and his money from the passers-by, and beckoned to him with a motion of his head: "Levi, follow me!" And instantly the man arose, and leaving his money behind, came after him. Thus Gaddiel saved his toll, and passed on, shaking his head disapprovingly at such folly. The temptation also seized him to enter the booth and appropriate a handful of the money, that was lying in heaps on a

¹ A half shekel.

² Dipondius — about one cent.

table. But one of the Gentile bailiffs was standing too close to allow an interference with Cæsar's business.

He roamed about aimlessly for hours, ever and anon finding himself on the road to the suburb, where his father's mansion stood. He felt the gnawing of hunger, and again wended his weary way out of the city, having decided to feast on the fruits of the vineyards and orchards, as his capital was too small to pay for more substantial fare at one of the hostellries.

It was now well past the middle of the afternoon, and everywhere through the open sides of the houses he saw how his townsmen were reclining at their evening repast. He was acquainted with them all, and had often enjoyed sumptuous fare at their tables. Perhaps one might recognize him, and bid him sit down at his side, as many had done of yore; not all may take his father's view of his failing. But he had taken the precaution of having his head shorn, and his face shaven, after the manner of the Romans, when he undertook his homeward journey, and thus presented an appearance that would at once repel the interest of a Jew, and make him unrecognizable. His hunger was becoming very sharp; his very entrails were cold with bitterness and desolation. His father's servants had their fill, and his neighbors feasted; but he was hungering for the morsel of the beggar.

Now arriving at the head of the wide street, which terminated in a large open space, the playground of the children and the counsel mart of the idle old and the busy meddlers, he came upon a jolly crowd of men and children who were gathering before the house of Levi, the publican. He joined himself to them, drawing his cloak up over his shaven chin, and pulling the cowl of his mantle down over his naked forehead.

But now he saw Levi himself bustling from the house, and going about among the curious crowd to invite this one

and that to enter, and to rejoice with him. Gaddiel was hungry enough to eat even at the table of a publican, and wished that the generous host would beckon to him also with his beaming face. He walked forward, step by step, toward Levi, half eager, half timid, and ashamed until he could not well be passed over. And his desire was so plainly visible in his hungry gaze, that Levi divined it at a distance. He hurried toward the destitute youth, and putting his arm under Gaddiel's, led him into the house and seated him at the table without much ceremony. A servant brought a basin with water, and loosening the new guest's sandals washed his feet, and then unwrapping his headgear, also washed his head and face with a wet towel.

Nobody seemed to take undue notice of the new arrival; but Gaddiel himself would not feel at ease before he had studied his surroundings. He fell to eating and drinking immediately, but was paying as much attention to his neighbors, and, after a while, to the whole assembly, as to his appetite.

He had been placed at an outer table near the balustrade separating the hall from the porch, where he could easily overhear the scoffing observations of the Scribes and Pharisees who crowded the entrance and the porch. The general tone of their scattered comment was one of hostility and contempt. They "deprecated very much that so much distinction should be shown a publican by one who posed as a teacher of the people: what must become of the nation and its honor, when a man preaches the glory of Israel in the morning, and sits down to wine and meat with sinners and publicans in the evening!" "It is a scandal!" he heard one exclaim; "he should be cast forth to be stoned outside the city gates."

Of whom were they complaining with such hate? Gaddiel scanned the guests once more, but they were all of one stripe; publicans, sinners, and castaways, like himself, enjoy-

ing the hospitality of a man who had turned an “honest penny” in the service of Cæsar. It was easy comfort for the well-fed critics at the door to hurl their condemnation at the hungry beggars, and the much maligned public taxgatherers.

“That man Jesus,” one now said with a voice loud enough to carry through the hall, and, no doubt, intended to reach the object of their scorn, “that man Jesus is disturbing the minds of the people throughout Gennesar and Gadara with his new doctrine, and his unpatriotic deportment!”

It was Jesus, then, that had aroused their ire! Gaddiel turned on the speaker, and whispered cynically: “Feed ye the widows, and clothe ye the orphans, and shelter ye the homeless, and serve ye your God less for money and glory—and ye will have no reason for complaint against this man’s teaching and deportment!”—Gaddiel must at that hour have had a recollection of the cleansing of the Temple two years before.

At this juncture, Jesus was seen to arise from the table, and quietly to walk to the door. There he stood calmly facing his accusers. They retreated before him, and vacated the space in front of the door, arraying themselves in a semicircle on the pavement beneath the porch. But he raised his voice above the murmured execrations that some pronounced on his head, and above the taunts of others, that “the disciples of John and the pious Jews fasted, but that he ate with publicans and sinners,” and rebuked them: “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. Go ye, therefore, and learn what that meaneth: ‘I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:¹ for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’”

But the Pharisees went away, ridiculing him: “Bah! go thou forth and tell the children of Israel that they are sick, and that thou art come as their physician, thou wine-bibber!”

¹ Hosea, 6, 6.

The guests of Levi, who had been attentive spectators to the scene, rushed out of the hall in anger after them. Jesus returned into the house, and sent out some of his disciples to restore order. Among them was Judas, who stopped in surprise before Gaddiel, but hurried out in another instant.

A little later the whole swarm returned, led by Gaddiel's father. In the midst of the crowd was Judas Iscariot, grinning maliciously and talking and gesticulating towards everyone within reach of his subdued voice with the vivacity of a spider weaving and hanging out its net. And all the while he was pointing at the pale figure of Gaddiel standing abjectedly at the balustrade, near the entrance. All faces were turned upon him. When he saw his father, he knew that Judas had betrayed him.

But what was it to the prodigal, if his father should repeat his curse in public? He was so wretched that one blow more or less in his face would not alter the sense of the deep humiliation that he felt more keenly since he returned to the scenes of his former happiness. He turned his head to look for the Prophet, and saw him standing at his side.

Jesus motioned to him to follow into the interior of the hall, and led the way, drawing him on with his eyes intently fixed on him. Gaddiel hesitated for one fatal moment. He looked around to behold his father planting himself squarely before him. Simon's face was very pale, and his lips quivered. But he peered silently into his son's eyes, as if to make certain that there was no mistake of identity; slowly his face broadened, and his trembling mouth opened, with a satanic smile of hatred and contempt, and he bellowed: "My son? No! My son is dead; I have no more son!" And turning he rejoined the crowd, who moved away, noisy, incredulous, and disappointed. But when he reached the street he stripped a shoe from his foot, and hurled it into his son's face,¹ in testimony of the irrevocableness of his curse. Gad-

¹ The sign of the deepest contempt.

diel did not turn his face aside, and received this token of his final rejection with the hideous calmness of a madman. His heart stood still under the tumult of his rage. He cursed his father for this public display of his hatred, and for this cruel and vile flourishing of his brutal contempt. He would fling himself upon the unnatural parent, and strangle him with his own hands, and pluck out his eyes, and crush them under the heel of his boot!

He stumbled down the few steps to the pavement, and disappeared in the arbors and bowers of the gardens. Whither turn now? The future seemed a hell to him. Return, and associate himself to the new Prophet? No, not now! He would not again attempt to be converted. He flung himself on the ground in despair. Why not whip out the dirk which he carried in his sash, and lean upon it, and force it into this aching heart, and end this misery of a blighted youth! Why not cast himself into the oblivion of a silent grave at the bottom of the lake?

Once more he turned over the pages of the past to seek the name of a single friend, into whose bosom he might empty his despair, and be healed; but there was only one name that had remained unsullied on the begrimed scroll of his memory: Thamar, the leper. He was startled to learn that of all the bright-eyed damsels of his acquaintance, and of all the sprightly lads whom he had called friends, the wild and now withering flower of Egypt, a stranger to his God and his people, was alone left to breathe sweet comfort into his embittered soul.

Her father had not told him where she was concealed; Silas would prefer to keep his secrets to himself. But he knew that she was bestowed in some retreat about Magedan; her father had not been out of sight long enough to conduct her to Egypt as he had planned. "I will search for her," Gaddiel resolved, "and confess to her that I am a fellow-sufferer; for my heart is diseased."

But what comfort could the leprous maiden minister to him? What sort of comfort did he crave? He did not know; but he did know that he must find a heart to suffer with him, lest he perish with desolation.

The thought of self-murder he discarded instantly as an illusion: who knows but that the grave was not utterly dark? "If I sin," he quoted, "thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity";¹ and after a while: "And though worms destroy this skin and body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."² He found strength in the reflection that the fear of God's judgment could stay his hand from self-destruction, for he abhorred death no less than he dreaded to live a stranger upon the earth.

He arose, and proceeded on the road to the vineyards of Miriam, which he could easily reach in an hour. The brisk gait that he struck despite his weariness, and the balmy air of the night, scented with the delicate perfume of the wild rose and the olive and vine blossoms, renewed in a measure the vigor of his heart, and insensibly, recalled the love of life.

At the first watch tower, where he entered the gardens, he was stopped by Omer, who touched his breast with the head of a short spear, but did not say a word. "A friend, Omer, a friend!" he cried, and fell back. "No friends in this vineyard at night!" answered the grim watchman, and forced the intruder out of the gardens at the point of his weapon.

There was no compromising with this uncouth watchdog. Gaddiel muttered a curse as he sprang over the wall, and disappeared in the shadow of the groves.

"But," said he, after his anger had cooled down, "why is he so surly? For a few grapes or figs Omer would not move a finger. Is he the custodian of some secret? And is this secret the hiding place of the leper?" His very uncompromis-

¹ Job, 10, 14.

² Ibid. 19, 26.

ing clumsiness put the secret, which he was guarding, to hazard. He would grope around here, and closely watch the surroundings.

A little farther down the highway, where the garden wall receded from the public road, about two hundred cubits from the tower, he trespassed again, and skulked through the dark bushes as quietly as a fox. He heard someone speak, not far from him. He listened: it was the voice of Silas! Ah, here was the secret! Carefully raising his head and looking toward the gravel-strewn walk at the foot of the opposite terrace, he discovered his old chief and the leper engaged in a whispered conversation. He sounded the cry of the heron, the signal of the nightly prowlers of the mountains, which he had learnt to utter so distinctly and accurately that anyone, except the chief, would have been deceived by its naturalness. But Silas had himself taught him the accomplishment, and instantly noticed the scarcely perceptible trace of the human voice. He started, and straightway plunged through the vines. The next moment Gaddiel felt his chief's hands on his throat.

"Miserable boy!" Silas growled, and directed Callidora toward the tower with a motion of the head. Then he dragged the youth out of the garden into the shadow of the trees, where he pressed him against a trunk, and set his dirk on his breast: "Gaddiel, imp! What demon hath prompted thee to spy on my secret? Thou must die!"

But the young man was so pale, and presented such a picture of misery and desolation, that the highwayman felt compassion for his former companion, and withdrew the gleaming knife. Gaddiel gasped for breath, and between gasps and groans stammered out: "Have mercy, chief I have come to seek thy child for comfort, not for treason. I am broken body and soul; my father —!" But as his strength returned, he spoke with more courage, and at last raising his voice, he added, fiercely: "My father, chief, is

not my father more; may the vultures of the brooks eat his flesh, and the winds of the desert bleach his bones; may his food be turned into carrion, and his drink into wormwood at the touch of his lips, and may his entrails be filled with fire —!"

"Halt, madman!" cried Silas; "pronounce not a curse upon thy father's head, for the breath of the Almighty will blight the marrow of thy bones. As thou wouldest tremble at the shadow of God passing over thee, thou shalt honor thy father!"

But Gaddiel, nothing placated, continued:

"I will withdraw this curse, to repeat it thousandfold; let it enter into my nostrils, and fill my belly that it may be my daily meat! I have not had a father! He hath denied me this day before the companions of my childhood, he hath made my mother a curse in the face of the God of Israel: he hath made her womb the disgrace of a concubine. Why shall I bless him! I will cast his name from me, as I cast off this cloak!" And he rent his cloak in pieces, and flung it upon the thorns. Then he resumed: "Call me Ben Hadassah,¹ after the name of my mother. The dishonor of bearing my name by grace of a woman shall be a glory to me. Take me, chief, as one of thine, and make me thy body-guard. I shall shield thee with my body, and warm thee with my breath, and be happy to die with thee!"

Silas opened his arms to receive him. Never before had he witnessed a conversion to his own cause as sincere as this, embodying the complete renunciation of all the earthly ties of Ben Hadassah. This man would never betray the retreat of his dear one.

Gaddiel should not have ventilated his feelings against his father at that stage of ferment and fever. Passions must be smothered to be controlled. The hungry flames leap out of the heart, and consume in a general conflagration

¹ Hadas-myrtle; Hadassah, the chosen one (*Esther*).

everything noble within their reach. Ben Hadassah might have been converted to sentiments of repentance, had he laid his grief open to the inspection of Callidora's tenderness; for he had long courted the society of courtesans and foreigners in secret, against the inviolable traditions of his father's house, and thus had incurred the indignation long before it burst over him in the form of that terrible curse pronounced in Jerusalem. And after that, instead of doing penance in sackcloth and ashes, he associated himself to thieves, and then returned to the cursed bondage of his infatuation with the "Sinner." But he smarted under the goad of his own pride, deluded fool that he was, more than under the lash of his father's condemnation.

Yet it was natural in one not trained to self-control and self-discipline, in one weaned by his entire education from the sentiments of humility and whole-hearted obedience, and accustomed to the wiles of the hypocrite from his earliest youth, to be too proud to bear correction patiently and profitably. As long as temptation had lain asleep at the side of his path through life, he had been secure from harm; but when it roused and raised its gold-crowned head out of the dust, the unwary boy took it into his bosom for a toy; and before he had learnt his own peril had nursed for himself a mortal foe. He might now crush it in one shape; but it would rise in another, equally glittering, and equally seductive. It had multiplied, until its name was legion. The only defense against its propagation, the floods of penitential tears and the fires of contrition, were a degrading superstition in his sight, seasonable to the stupidity of the benighted masses, but wholly undesirable in the heights of enlightenment that he had climbed under the leadership of his zealous teachers. He had been taught that God's blessings would follow in the wake of punctual observance of the Law, and that the Law was the ceremonial; that the reward of such justice would be wealth and honor in this life:

hence, as long as these blessings were blooming in his way, he would remain a party to the covenant of Jahveh; but should they fail — then Jahveh had betrayed his pledge, and he would work his own justification.

The veil over the dreaded future after death was drawn so close that they looked forward to the Messiah to explain the mysterious allusions of the prophets to the future state in the mansions of heaven. No explicit promises of happiness after this life had been given by their God, beyond such as were to be realized in the Kingdom of the Messiah; and no punishment was so evidently threatened as death for the offenses against the worship of Jahveh. Their history appeared to the teachers to be a recounting of the story of Eden; bliss and plenty as long as they were loyal, and hunger and hurt as soon as they fell away: but whether within or without the hallowed garden, they were the pampered children of their God, who held them in suspense with the promise of ultimate deliverance from ills, so lightly borne that in the lapse of ages they were no longer felt as ills, except on the days of official atonement, or in some national calamity. But now they had not turned from their God for many hundred years; thus the days of repentance had become ceremonial holy days, claiming only their exterior participation. Jewry sorely needed a second Jeremiah to wake up the national conscience to a sense of intimacy with God, who was now to them the mere reflection of their own gross lust after national elevation and aggrandizement.

But John had preached repentance, and they allowed Herod to imprison him: if a second Jeremiah would arise in their midst, would they not also stone him to death in the streets of their City?

With such faded religious ideals it was but natural that the whole nation should drift into the narrow channel of fanaticism and formalism; and the individual defections from their rank and file were the equally natural result of

such artificially enforced unity of worship and devotion. Prayer is tinctured with the heart's blood — but the Jews had unlearnt to pray.

Had the unfortunate scion of the Pharisee poured out the bitterness of his soul to God, he would have found strength and solace. Or was not his earnest desire to speak out his unhappiness to the only one whom he still respected, an instinctive effort of his soul to pray?

After renewing his promise not to reveal the secret of Callidora's hiding place to anyone, even at the peril of his life, Silas led him away into the darkness. Toward morning they arrived at a post of prowlers, established in the neighborhood of Thella, not far from the banks of the Jordan, among the cliffs and caverns of the wild hill country. They were too tired to eat, and forthwith lay down to rest under an overhanging boulder.



CHAPTER V

ANOTHER STORM

THE night that Miriam returned from the blood-stained banquet of Herod marked a turn in her life. She retired to her royally appointed chambers, alone, contrary to her custom of admitting her trusted maid Hannah to her nightly retreat. Hannah had received orders to sleep in an adjoining room. Before the doors to her apartments she had stationed two of her men-servants fully armed, and under strict orders to admit no one under any circumstances.

She lay down on a soft couch to rest, and recover, if possible, from the effects of the rioting and the shock of the tragic conclusion of the festivities. She held down her eyelids with her fingers to shut out the phantoms of mingled joy and horror; she was equally afraid of either. There was a rent in her soul, which seemed to her to admit ever and anon a cold blast that chilled her blood. Between the cold stare of sin in the eyes of that pretty dancing damsel, and the gaze of sorrow and sanctity congealed in the eyes of that head which paid the price of the dancer, her fancy was roving incessantly with the despair of a prisoner between water and fire. She was not so depraved at heart that she could make brutal fancies the intimate fellows of her sentiments. She had been thoughtless, giddy, foolish, shallow, and superficial: she had reveled and gloried in the pride of her youth and beauty, but with the secret reserve of an independence grounded on the nobility of her early purity and piety. These endowments she had soiled, but neither eradicated nor entirely crushed. Her sin was only as deep

as the flesh; she had become a wanton, but not a fool. Sin had lured her on step by step to the depth, where there was naught for her to endure but an empty darkness. Insensibly she had been submerged: but when the water entered icy into her warm breast, she cried out for help and struggled for deliverance.

But who should deliver her!

She arose from her couch, and dropped on her knees, and raising her outstretched arms toward heaven, attempted to pray: "Out of the depths have I cried to Thee, O Lord; Lord hear my voice!" She repeated this prayer, until the tears of fear and compunction trickled down into her bosom. Then she threw herself prone on the floor, and remained a long time in silent prayer. When she arose, her pallid face, her disheveled hair, her rosy fingers, were wet with her tears. Her breath came in sobs and sighs heavy and irregular. She moved about dreamily, taking up an article here and there, and setting it down again without purpose. Her mind was in such a state of agitation that she paid no conscious heed to her surroundings, disturbing and deranging them without aim, like the stormy sea tossing the wreckage from the abyss in which it has buried and wrecked the ship.

But youth lends ready assistance to nature in asserting its strength. Miriam was overtaken by sleep in the act of tearing the golden spangles from her veil. She had sat down on her couch, begun to pluck the fine ornaments from her cloak, and unwound her veil to remove the little disks of gold — whether consciously or not — when her eyes became heavy, and she slowly fell back into the swelling cushions, fast asleep. The candles had burnt down, and shortly went out, burying her and her sorrow in darkness. She moaned, as if in dread of some impending peril; and once she distinctly shouted the name of the Prophet of Nazareth, as if in anguish crying for his help against violence done to her. Hannah was aroused from her slumber, and know-

ing the distress of her mistress, decided to watch over her. Again "Jesus, Jesus!" she cried, but this time pleadingly. The maid opened the door between the two apartments, and parting the curtains peered into the dark room. Presently she noticed that Miriam arose, and tottered into the middle of the room, where she fell heavily on the floor, again uttering that cry. But after a few gasps she added with piteous earnestness: "Have mercy on me, a sinner!"

Hannah brought light from her own chamber — for she would not sleep in the dark — and lifted her mistress from the floor. She was not asleep, but seemed dazed. After placing her on a couch, Hannah procured some wine from a jug in an outer room, and put the crystal cup to Miriam's lips. But she refused to drink, and gently, but with evident signs of disgust, pushed the cup aside. "Never more!" she said; "wormwood and gall is fit drink for me. I am a sinner, Hannah!"

The maid tried to comfort her. But Miriam was not to be comforted by words. She was now again fully alive to her condition, and throwing her arms around Hannah's neck — an intimacy lately unknown in her conduct toward her maid — she begged her: "Hannah, I have something to confess to thee; wilt thou listen?"

Hannah signified her readiness by snuggling more closely into her mistress's arms, and she continued: "I have had a dream this night, the counterpart of that which I related to thee about a year ago, of Jesus of Nazareth storming my palace and carrying me off, that I should see him die on the gibbet. This night I saw him standing on the summit of Mount Hermon in light and glory, a giant in stature, his head reaching into the starry canopy of the night, and the crown on his head paling the splendor of the moon. The earth was cast in darkness at his feet. The mountain was but a footstool, so small it seemed. His garments were the garments of a King, white, flowing, a girdle of gold about

his loins and a priestly stole crossed over his breast. But in his hand was a shepherd's crook, and in the folds of his bosom he bore a lamb, and about his feet were gathered sheep and lambs as far as the ends of the land. When I beheld him first, I mingled with the lambs, but he thrust me aside with his crook, and I fell from a precipice into the dark caverns of the abyss, which were filled with smoke, and howling and execration. At first I also wanted to curse him; but as I opened my lips, the earth trembled under and about me and there was such a terrible roar of thunder that I fell down on my face like dead. When I recovered and looked up, I saw him encircled with a halo of blood-red light, elevated above the earth, lying upon his back bruised and bleeding, his garments torn and blood-stained, his golden crown intertwined with thorns; the lamb in his bosom was dead, and the flock beneath his feet were straying about, and he dying, his arms outstretched toward the dark heaven above him. He called my name in the dread silence, and I was raised up to him. There I saw that a spear was driven into his heart. I plucked it out — and as I did so, he died, saying: "They shall see whom they have pierced." I was so ravished with love at sight of the dead Shepherd-King, that I knelt down on his breast, and lo! in a moment the vision passed, and I was standing with him in loving converse on the shore of the Lake. He held a full-blown white rose in his hand, which I much admired. I begged him to give it to me. But he said, smiling down at the rose that seemed to mirror and return his smile: "This is the lamb that died in my bosom."

"Then give it into mine that it may live again," I replied eagerly; for I would have that rose from his hands.

"It is Thamar," he continued, searching my soul with his eyes. I blushed for shame, and was much embarrassed. Thou knowest, Hannah, how I have cowardly cast out the poor strange maid. I was ashamed unto fading away.

But I summoned courage, and asked again: "Give me the rose, the lamb, the child!"

"While I was yet pleading with him, Simon of Capernaum approached, and standing behind him, pointed his finger in my face, and pursed his lips with scorn to repeat the terrible reproach which he shouted at me in Jerusalem; but the good Man of Nazareth intercepted his words, and said: 'The "*Wild Rose*" of Gan-Sar.' At that moment the white rose turned to crimson, and he fastened it at my bosom. Hannah, I fell down at his feet asking mercy, and thanking him for his kindness of heart. Hannah, Jesus of Nazareth shall also be my prophet!"

Hannah was a Jewish maiden of good birth, of ordinary education, and unsophisticated in her views of matters which did not touch her personal interests. She had no habits, and neither friends nor foes. She ordered her conduct upon the demands of the occasion, and fell into or out of the grace of her neighbors without the slightest change of temperament. If people could not forget an unpleasantness occurring in their dealings with her, she would forget it the sooner, the more likely it was to disturb her absolute complacency. She was not like a stone, void of sentiment; but rather like a sponge, receiving eagerly, but giving up again according to pressure. It may oft have exasperated the dainty and sensitive Miriam to have to deal with such a character, slippery, callous, neither decidedly good nor yet at all wicked, dumb, or sounding hollow on striking; but only such a character would enable a woman to make intimate acquaintance with the failings of a Miriam, and not desert her. She wondered with Miriam, she sobbed and cried and smiled with her; but she had no sympathy to express, no hope to hold out, and, least of all, encouragement to speak into her struggling soul. After having expressed her admiration at the vivid description of the dream, she drawled out a reminiscence of her school days, which she had never

understood, but which suggested itself as a suitable comment on the dream: “‘And they shall say to him: What are these wounds in the midst of thy hands? And he shall say: With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved me. Awake, O sword against my *Shepherd*, and against the man that cleaveth to me, saith the Lord of hosts: strike the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be dispersed: and I will turn my hand to the *little ones*.’¹—Thou art a prophetess, mistress mine,” she added; “hast thou not seen me also in thy vision?”

Miriam was sorely disappointed at the scant appreciation, and her love of banter reasserting itself at the moment, she replied: “Ay, Hannah; I saw thee as a little green worm in the heart of the crimson rose.”

And Hannah, nothing discomfited, said: “Then keep that little green worm right warm in thy heart, O Rose of Gan-Sar!”

At cock-crow they again lay down together to await the break of day. It was not long before gentle slumber folded them in soft embrace, and poured oblivion and the gratification of new vigor into their souls.

On the morning they were surprised with the news that Gaddiel Ben Simon had joined the Zealots, and had been appointed to the post of Silas at Bethphage. The mystery about the appointment was that Silas himself had never been a member of the Fighting Brethren, but had only now and then given succor and shelter to the stragglers under persecution. Miriam was startled at the strange report; not because Gaddiel had enlisted in the ranks of the patriots, who were fanatics and monsters in her eyes; for many thousands of the noblest Jews had joined the doughty fraternity; but because, as rumor had it, he was assigned to a station in close proximity to the lairs of those prowlers who were rather thieves than patriots; who clothed their unwar-

¹ Zach. 13, 6-7.

rantable violence against the whole land with the pretext of just retribution against traitors to their cause. When they had sworn not to spare even father or brother, should they become disloyal to the national aspirations of Israel, they had likewise made a traitor of every man who refused to serve them with all his substance and sufficiency. Many of the Zealots were fanatics merely, such as turbulent times are likely to breed in any period; but many, on the other hand, were plainly nothing more than licensed incendiaries and cut-throats, or demagogues and disturbers generally. Still this element must be tolerated by the leaders lest the general striking force be fatally crippled.

Miriam was pained to think that she was the cause of the ruin of the proud youth. For the first time since her acquaintance with him began, she was sorry over his plight. She would endeavor to rescue him; and she began by offering a fervent petition to the Lord God of hosts, on her knees, and with uplifted hands, that he might show her the way of his liberation.

That morning they departed from Callirhoe for their home on the beautiful shores of the Lake of Gennesar. Their way lay around the southern extremity of the Asphalt Sea,¹ for they must avoid the savage tribes inhabiting the region to the northeast of the Dead Sea and the Jordan, and of "the Galilee of the pagans."

Miriam had laid aside her costly garments, and was attired in the modest garb of the gentlewomen of her race. But her beauty did not suffer for the modesty of her attire. She truly looked the solitary autumn rose, fresh, bright, and sweet, yet lonely, and bereft of the company of her sisters which would render her beauty less apparent, but more natural.

The weary journey through Idumea passed without incident, and they arrived in Judea about the feast of *Purim*, or

¹ The Dead Sea.

"Lots," which was celebrated on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of *Adar*.¹ But Miriam decided to spend the cold and rainy spring at Jericho, the flower garden of Palestine. The regular remittances of large sums from home were proof of the wise administration of Rapha, and relieved her of every anxiety about her own prosperity both abroad and at home. And thus she remained at that beautiful and wealthy city also through the summer, going up to Jerusalem only for the feast of the Tabernacles.²

No sooner had they engaged lodgings in Jerusalem than they were informed that Jesus of Nazareth had also come up from Galilee to attend the feast. Miriam was disturbed at the information. Although she had resolved to study his career and learn from his doctrine, still she dreaded her first meeting with him. She would avoid him for the present and observe him from a distance. She felt that he knew her, having called her through Thamar, and she knew that she merited his severest rebuke. And her faith in him began to wane under the stress of her fear and anxiety. But now she *wanted* to believe in him, irrespective of her sentiments, and, therefore, struggled hard to preserve the last anchor to which she had clung in the hour of her greatest peril, the night of her tearful regeneration after the banquet of Herod. She dreaded the advent of the physician, whose skill she knew was her only salvation.

In the house where she had taken lodgings for the feast-days were also quartered some of the cousins of Jesus. Sophas, their spokesman, the most dignified man in the company, soon made friends with the retinue of Miriam, and seemed anxious to impress them with his own dignity of standing so close to the Prophet. As long as the sun of the popular admiration was bright and full over the head of his celebrated kinsman, Sophas basked in the rays that were

¹ February and March.

² 15-21 days of *Ethanim* or *Tisri*, September and October: Harvest feast.

reflected upon the Prophet's surroundings: like a frog sunning itself under the azure sky, complacently blinking at the passers-by but seeking the shelter of the deep when storm and cold ply their whip over the trembling reeds. At the present hour, Jesus was the Lion of the day. He had not come up to the feast on the first day: and the people had sought him, and regretted his absence. In the market places, in the streets, in the courts of the Temple, at the inns, his works, doctrine, and institutions were the unending topic of conversation, controversy, dispute, and quarreling. He had during his long sojourn in Galilee, his journey through Samaria, through Gadara and the Decapolis, cast out demons, healed the dumb, the deaf, the blind, cleansed lepers, and, most stupendous work of all, raised the twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus, the nomarch of the synagogue, from the dead! He had chosen twelve men as his messengers, whom he himself accredited by the power of miracles. He had ordained many disciples as teachers throughout the length and breadth of the land: and even these men wrought signs and wonders in his name upon the sick and oppressed!

The people proclaimed him the Messiah. But they were not all of one opinion. Too many were deeply imbued with the scepticism, born of jealousy, of the Pharisees; many also were in deep sympathy with the Zealots: and both the Pharisees and the Zealots were opposed to his doctrine; the former, because he censured their insincerity before the public, the latter, because he preached obedience and patience, and universal charity.

Thus many espoused his cause sincerely, because they said: "When the Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?"¹ And others opposed him, merely because the Pharisees said: "The Christ shall not come out of Galilee!" They had forgot that their fathers had showed the way to his cradle at Beth-

¹ John, 7, 31.

lehem, thirty years before, to the princely visitors from the East.

Sophas, who was well acquainted with the incidents of the Prophet's childhood, interspersed the discourse concerning him with such remarks as these, assuming an air of mystery, which he chilled with the flaunting of his own superiority to his benighted listeners. "We would gladly accept him for a prophet," he would say, "if he would not make himself the Son of the living God. Only yesterday he cried aloud in the Temple, that God was one with him, and he named God his father! But out of Galilee no prophet riseth, out of the land of Zebulon and Nephthali. Albeit be he born at the city of David, yet we are all Galileans, his kinsfolk and his parents."

There was the sarcasm of jealousy on his tongue. Nicodemus, a Pharisee, but in secret a disciple of Jesus, an honest and pious man, who had come down to the lodging of these Galileans in order to learn from his kinsmen the story of the early life of Jesus, was sorely offended at this manifestation of ignorance in one so near the noble Master. He bade silence, and rising in the midst of the astonished assembly, replied to the sneers of Sophas: "Son, thou knowest not whereof thou speakest. Hast thou not read that 'the Lord will multiply the nation, but not increase the joy; that they rejoice before Him as with the joy of the harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoils? That He afflicted Galilee, the populous, the land of Zebulon and Nephthali, the people that walk in darkness: but that a Great Light shall shine upon them that walk in darkness, and dwell in the land of the shadow of death'?"¹ Thou and thine have 'rejoiced in him,' because he glorified you; but now he glorifieth his Father and ye darken your brows, and sharpen your tongues to undo his word. Lift up your heads, and behold the Great Light, that hath arisen as the Star of

¹ Is. 9, 1-3, and Matt. 4, 12-16.

Jacob out of Judah, and hath shone before you from Gennesar even unto the Holy Temple! He is the Christ of the Lord, the Light unto the manifestation of the Gentiles, and the Glory of his people Israel!"

Nicodemus had spoken with much fervor, and the hearers applauded him heartily; but Sophas arose and went forth frowning. After a little while, some other of the men followed him; only the women and the maidens, and two or three youths, remained. And when Nicodemus saw that the effect of his words had worn off so lightly, he also departed, much disheartened at such unnatural disaffection and gross egotism. If they, who had from childhood been the witnesses of the Prophet's earthly manifestation, who had on so many occasions seen the hand of the Lord in his life, and had often before applauded his wisdom and admired his sanctity: if they did not believe in him, because of envy, how would those come to the faith in him, before whose eyes he appeared in all the glamour of his supernatural power, and the lowness of his human descent? And yet, this very contrast in his manifestation proclaimed him the Messiah. Was not man fallen, fallen from a high estate, the chosen child of the Most High, become the prey of his own corruption? For it was meet that such a one, that tasted human infirmities, but was not contaminated with them, should become the high priest, the Mediator between God and man, one, holy and innocent, undefiled and separated from sinners, who needed not to offer sacrifice for his own sins first, and then for the people's.¹

Miriam, who in these quarters vividly remembered the reproach of Simon, the Pharisee, "the Harlot of Gan-Sar," was not in the company of the disputants. But she had heard every word from an adjoining chamber, which was separated from them only by a curtain. Involuntarily she approved the exultation of Nicodemus, as she had involuntarily reproved the scorn and levity of Sophas. When now

¹ See Heb. 7, 26.

the group were arguing for and against Nicodemus, some applauding the liberalism of Sophas, and censuring the narrowness of Nicodemus, who would make the Prophet the very Son of God, she burnt to join in the discussion. She had indeed not formed an opinion of her own; but the enthusiasm of Nicodemus had kindled her soul. If Jesus was not the very Son of God, he was, at least, a most remarkable man. No one could accuse him of wrong. He was sober, pious, charitable, indulgent with the lowly, and stern with the haughty, and withal a true lover of his people. What if he did make himself the Son of God? It is a stroke of his exaltation. "We all are the sons of God," she said, "if we do the will of God. If he appropriates this title to himself more intimately than we would dare to do — well, he is so much the purer and chaster. But, truly, if he should insist that he is consubstantial with the Lord God, he would be guilty of blasphemy, and we should stone him to death. — Why must this man come between me and my God at this hour, when I have come to the Holy City to make my offering of propitiation, and be declared free from all my sins! I am about to return to my people and my God — and this Jesus of Nazareth is forcing me out of the customary course to forgiveness, and makes me hesitate, lest I be mistaken, and the priests with me! Avaunt! Peace with God first, and then I will look him over!"

The next day was to be the Great Day of the feast, on which the Prophet would surely again ascend to the Temple to preach. It was to be the last of the holy days, and the most solemn. Then she would present herself with all due humility to the high priest and ask his intercession by prayer and sacrifice that she might be reconciled to the Law, and once again be a true daughter of Israel. She would cast her past sins behind herself, and look forward to the Kingdom of God, with undimmed hope and renewed courage. Then she would observe Jesus of Nazareth, whether he

would take notice of her and perhaps personally invite her to come after him. Once that she was again in full accord with the worship and observances of her people, it would cost him a personal address to make her his follower, and great power of eloquence to persuade her to anything opposed to the observances of the enlightened Pharisees. They were undoubtedly the exponents of everything good in the faith of the fathers. She had so long sneered at their insincerity; but she had had a motive: they despised her infidelity and laxity, her want of reverence and patriotism. Now she would endeavor to repair the scandal which she had given, and all would be well.

While she was studying, or, so to speak, rehearsing in her mind, the act of her conversion, and her servants and the visitors were engaged in a heated discussion over the merits of the cause of the Prophet — the most serious doubts being raised about his doctrine of the “Kingdom of God” — they were all startled by a shout in the street: “Ben Hadas-sah! Ben Hadassah!” It was a shout of derision uttered from a score of throats at once. All sprang to the balustrade, even Miriam leaving her hiding-place, to see the man who bore the name of a woman.¹

Miriam, who was quick-witted, and reasoned with the swiftness of intuition, felt her heart beat loud and fast under the burden of the thought: “There is only one man who would reject the name of his father — and his mother’s name was Esther, or Hadassah — Gaddiel Ben Simon.” But the young man whom she saw, the object of public ridicule, walking in the midst of a company of some twenty quiet men, young and middle-aged, was certainly no likeness of Gaddiel, the dainty and delicate boy of her acquaintance. This youth walked erect, with natural dignity; his

¹ Yet this was nothing extraordinary, as Jos. Fl. (*Jewish War*, 4, 3, 5, l. 145), reports of John of Gamala, that he was surnamed Ben-Dorcas “the Son of the Gazelle.” (Dorcas was his mother’s name.)

eyes were ablaze with animation, without a trace of the offense which Gaddiel would have taken at such treatment; his face was bearded, his beautiful brown hair hung in short curly locks about his neck without the artificial sheen that dyeing had imparted to Gaddiel's. He was also a head taller, and broader in the shoulders and the chest than the Galilean coxcomb, every inch of whom she knew.

"Ben Hadassah! Ben Hadassah!" they shouted, as he proceeded calmly towards the Temple-mount. The children gathered around and followed him, and pointed him out to each other — and admired him. His calm, proud bearing inspired them with respect and wonder. They had not yet learnt to love their fathers better than their mothers for the idle distinction of the flesh, and the deep-rooted prejudices of coarse-fibered lordliness; their curiosity at the man who bore the name of his mother had been roused by the jeers of their elders, which they repeated merely because of the habit of imitating their betters. Some of the maidens at the edge of the street even cast loving glances at him, who braved the ridicule of the masses for the love of his mother, a woman held in subjection like themselves. He turned his fiery eyes on them as frankly as a boy, and with a bland smile passed them by. He seemed to be proof against the smile of admiration as much as against the frown of hostility or the leer of scorn, a truly noble man.

Some said he belonged to the school of the Essenes, who were wholly indifferent to the things of this life; others, "nay, he is an Alexandrian of the great school whence come the noblest Jews, even though they be less Hebrew than Greek." — Beauty and dignity will ever provoke the sentiments laid away deepest in the soul.

Miriam was fascinated. She would not take her eyes off the fine youth, until he disappeared behind the gate at the foot of the walled hill. It seemed like a profanation of her holy resolve, to take such interest in a man now that she

had left the ways of evil; but was she not free to make a choice of the noblest for a husband? She would go to the Temple on the morrow, at all events; he would surely be there.

The rest of that day she spoke of nothing but that manly youth to Hannah, who herself sighed softly and tenderly over "such perfection of the human form." "Were he the Prophet, I should fall in love with him at once," she purred, "and follow him to the ends of the earth! Why is Jesus of Nazareth not so proud, so fine, so bold, so strong, so lovely! He would take all Israel by storm, and be our King!"

"Ay," said Miriam rather testily; "but he could be the king of only one of us, such king as thou wouldest have him be. The rest would be but concubines."

"Ah!" ejaculated Hannah, "there is room for many roses on a bush."

"Wild roses!" bantered Miriam; "and the one Wild Rose that he cherishes — is Miriam!"



CHAPTER VI

A TRANSFORMATION

IN the meantime a great transformation had taken place with Judas of Kerioth, "the Son of Simon." He had for a time tracked Silas, and watched Gaddiel, having found the scent of a secret in their doings. He had discovered the retreat of Callidora, but carried his discovery no further than to the ears of Jesus, who commended him for his charity, but warned him at the same time against idle and envious curiosity. "Have no cares at heart now," the Master had said to him, "except the zeal for the Kingdom of God; and watch and pray, that thou mayest not enter into new temptations." After which admonition Judas spent whole nights in prayer, and the days in labor with one or the other disciple, instructing the people, and exhorting them to repentance, and Jesus chose him with Simon and Andrew, James and John, and the rest, for his special messenger, or apostle. To him he entrusted the money which pious people offered to defray the expenses of their journeys.

This confidence was not so much a trust as a policy. Judas had just been converted from a sinful lust of money and was struggling against a habit of thieving that had grown into his flesh. If he sincerely desired to eradicate his vice, he must be exercised in liberality, and indifference toward the possession of gold and silver. A single act of renunciation, be it ever so sincere, would not fortify him forever against the temptations of covetousness. He must learn to die to the love of money, would he fit himself for the work which he had resumed unbidden.

It was a dangerous undertaking for him to seek admission to an office to which he had once been called without heeding. Still the care of the common funds would in a measure occupy his mind for a while in the same activity that he had been accustomed to, and would thus render the weaning less troublesome. Now he could indulge his besetting passion with the proper moderation, and in the interest of charity. Against excesses and improprieties in the collection and administration of his treasure, the Master would warn him in due season.

Judas was much rejoiced at this manifestation of the confidence of the Master. It was proof to him of his complete forgiveness of former offenses, at which Jesus had hinted on several occasions. He had restored the fifty gold pieces to the family at Cana, which Miriam had entrusted to him for a wedding gift to them; he had also paid Gaddiel for the loss of his gold chain, in so far as Gaddiel robbed him of his lawful possessions at the bridge of the Migdol. He was poor now, and he would be justified by any judge in the land. Whether he realized that in his ways he had done still more injustice to God than to man, did not appear from his actions. But he had returned to the ways of righteousness as they were taught by the Scribes, and this was justification enough for him. He would learn in time that the justice of the Scribes and Pharisees was not a door to the kingdom of heaven, and profit by the lessons to be learnt in the new school, that taught repentance as the root of conversion.

His conversion was brought about by a peculiar incident. One day, when Jesus had preached an inspiring sermon to the people, a young man of splendid parts, a favorite of fortune in many ways, came to him and asked:

“Master, what must I do that I may have life eternal?”

And the Master answering that he should have life by keeping the commandments, the youth insisted further:

"I have kept them all from childhood. What more must I do? For I would be justified before the Lord of hosts."

Thereupon, Jesus, seeing that his motive was self-glorification, replied with much emphasis:

"If thou wouldest be *perfect*, go and sell what thou hast, and give it to the poor, and coming, follow me."

But the young man became sorrowful, and walked away without another word, thus openly confessing to his insincerity in searching after the way of God's justification; for he had great wealth. But Jesus turning to his disciples said:

"Verily, I say unto you, that a rich man shall with difficulty enter the kingdom of heaven; it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God."

His disciples were exceedingly amazed and asked:

"Who can then be saved?"

But Jesus assured them, that although it was impossible for man to rid himself so thoroughly of the inordinate desires after the things of the world, as to make the service of God his only task, yet with the assistance of God, man would be purified and strengthened. And when Simon, the brother of Andrew, out of curiosity, asked: "Behold, we have forsaken all; what shall be our part?" Jesus assured him that they should receive a hundredfold in return, and should sit with him in twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. At these promises the soul of Judas was fired with sufficient desire for a part in the future glory and wealth of his Master, to let him make renunciation of the last of his earthly possessions, and restitution for his last thefts and pilferings. Had he understood the limitation placed upon these generous promises? Jesus had said: "Ye that have followed me shall sit in the throne of his glory, with the Son of man, in the regeneration," and, "that renunciation must be made for his name's sake," and again "that they should

inherit life everlasting.”¹ Judas was then dreaming, as also the rest, of the reestablishment of the Throne of David, that is, of the earthly Kingdom of the Jews, and was much too worldly-minded to understand the blessed truth of the assurance: “Blessed are ye, the poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.”² But in his own heart he had conceived the satisfaction of the wisdom of exchanging his paltry belongings for such glory as the wonder-worker would surely not fail to procure for himself and his ministers. For he had promised them: “Where I am, there also my minister shall be.”³ And this promise, repeated here with so much circumstance, raised up the heart of the covetous Judas.



On that afternoon, when Ben Hadassah with his score of followers ascended the Temple mount, Judas was standing in the porch of the Court of Solomon, conversing with the Pharisees about the doctrine of the Prophet, and detailing to them some of the wonderful works wrought in Galilee. They smiled incredulously at his narrative of the raising up of the daughter of Jairus.

“How can one dead come back to life?” they objected. But Judas waxed eloquent above his ordinary indolence, and rejoined:

“And how could Elishah raise up the dead boy? Surely by the finger of the Lord! And my Master hath raised the child by the power of his Father.”

“But whom doth he claim to be his father,” they insisted, “but the living God! It is blasphemy in a man to make God his father. Wouldst thou also make thyself guilty of his crime, and be judged with him?” And one laid his hand threateningly on his shoulder.

Judas was intimidated at once. He laughed to conceal his fear, and a grin of cowardly treason overspreading his

¹ Matt. 19.

² Luke, 6, 20.

³ John, 12, 26.

features, he answered: "I have not been with him long, but I have found his claims preposterous."

"But why dost thou walk with him, if thou knowest that he seduceth the people?" they pressed him. "Doth he not cast out devils by the prince of devils? Doth he not drink wine, and feast with the publicans and traitors? Hath he not tarried among the unclean infidels of Samaria? Speak, Judas, son of Simon; can such a man be the Great Prophet, the Promised of the Lord!"

And they were jostling him, and pulling him about hither and thither by his garments and his arms.

Now Judas was not naturally a coward. He had the brutal courage of strength together with a full proportion of pride, the two qualities uniting into that cold obstinacy that easily makes a man a traitor to himself. When his strength would not avail, he would whine like a trapped hound, and when his pride was wounded, he would bellow like a maddened bull. Such men are insecure in their deportment and temper. They are untrustworthy, unstable, untractable, because of their ineradicable conceit and selfishness. When the Pharisees committed the indignity against him of dragging him about, and jostling him, his hair crept with ungovernable anger, and extricating himself from their hands, he flung the last one, that was clinging to him, back upon the crowd, and bellowed out: "Away, ye sons of Belial!" and sprang into the interior of the court, where he concealed himself.

In the meantime Ben Hadassah had come up, and approached the chief of the Pharisees.

"Thou hast sent for me," he began to address him; "what wouldest thou have me do?"

The Pharisee was panting from anger at the insult of Judas, but suppressed his excitement, and answered: "We would thou shalt apprehend Jesus of Nazareth, and present him in bonds before the Great Council on the morrow.¹ He

¹ John, 7, 32.

is now even preaching in the Court of the Women; but thou shalt not lay hands on him in the Temple. Observe him, and when he retireth, take him away quietly, lest thou cause a disturbance among the people. For this man is a seducer!"

The priests and the Pharisees standing about nodded their heads in affirmation, and said: "Ay, ay, he is a seducer, and hath a devil!"

Ben Hadassah returned to his men, who had remained at the foot of the stairs, and quietly gave his orders. One could see, how twenty pairs of hands at once became busy tightening the girdles worn under the loose outer cloaks and sashes, and here and there the opening of a bosom betrayed the gleam of steel under the festive garb. These men were armed, and were bidden carry their arms into the Temple!

When the young leader appeared at the balustrade of the Court of the Women, which was one of the largest courts, and was open to all at the occasion of a public instruction by one of the great teachers, he was taken aback at the tumult reigning among the multitude, whom the Prophet was addressing. He could be heard distinctly only in the intervals of quiet, and Ben Hadassah admired his patience with their impudence. His discourse appeared to him like the felling of a tough terebinth with powerful, measured strokes, between which the panting of the woodman could be heard; or like the loud thunder of the sea throwing its roaring waves against a tower with fiercer strength at every attack, the intervals marking the pulse of certain victory.

"How doth he know letters," some quarreled, "since he never learnt them?" And others: "He preacheth as Isaiah, taught of the Lord himself"; and again others: "Or as Moses, who was a stammerer before the Lord loosened his tongue." But Jesus, when he could make himself heard, said in reply: "What I teach you, I teach not of myself, but of Him that sent me." Again there was an uproar of protest: "He maketh himself the Prophet that is to come in the name of

the Lord." But some said, warning the disturbers: "Wait, and let us see whether his doctrine be of God."

And Jesus continued: "If any man do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh the glory of him that sent him, he is true and there is no iniquity in him."

"But," some shouted at him, "didst thou not make thyself the Son of God in Galilee? Why dost thou not speak openly here among us in Jerusalem? And thou dost defy the Law, having healed the sick on the Sabbath day, and neglecting to wash thy hands before thou sittest down to eat bread."

Jesus answered: "Did not Moses give you the Law,¹ and none of you keepeth the Law? Why do ye go about to kill me?"

Ben Hadassah was struck with terror at this unexpected turn of the discourse. He dropped out of the reach of those indignant eyes, now turned upon him by that wonderful man, who openly defied hundreds and thousands, and cast the gauntlet at the feet of such unmitigable hatred and hostility, all alone. And these riotous masses only barked back at him: "Thou hast a devil! Who goeth about to kill thee?"²

Ben Hadassah withdrew his men, and left the court and the Temple in silence, overwhelmed with the majesty of this Lion crying in the wilderness of his people's confusion.



The next morning the Great Council was assembled in the house of Caiphas, the high priest, to deliberate on the cause of the new Prophet. Wherever the crowds of the

¹ The manifold and cumbersome ordinances under which the pious Jews groaned, were often observed in violation of the Mosaic Law.

² John, 7, 15-20.

people were free from the domination of the Scribes and Pharisees, they hailed Jesus of Nazareth for their King, the Messiah. The people were gradually slipping away from the leash of the leaders. It is true, now and then even the unsophisticated mind of the plainest people stumbled over the stupendous claim of the Prophet to be the Son of God; but he was plainly the Son of David to them, he of whom the older prophecies sang and sighed. And he himself had pointed out to the leaders, gathered about him at Capernaum, amid a great concourse of listeners, that David called him his Lord, and thus had silenced their slanderous tongues. Besides the helplessness of the wit of the leaders against his arguments and proofs, also the confidence of the afflicted in this title supported the simple faith of the people. Many who were oppressed by demons, or afflicted with disease, invoked his help by that prophetic name: “‘Son of David,’ have mercy on us!” This appellation had found such vogue, especially among the fiery Galileans, that it was constantly on the lips of young and old; and now it was cried abroad by the children through the streets of the City of David, the watchword of the pious, the charm and pledge of the national hopes; for the Messiah was to be this Son of David, of whom Isaiah had foretold: “A bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory; and in his name shall the Gentiles trust.”¹ The enthusiasm of the Galileans, who dwelled in the “region of the Gentiles,” the land of darkness, contributed not a little to the hatred of the proud Pharisees in Jerusalem. All Galilee claimed that the Messiah would manifest himself first in their own beautiful land, and that, although he be born in Judea, “the land of the Gentiles, of Zebulon and Nephthali,” was first to behold the Great Light that was to rise out of their land. Now this opinion began to gain ground rapidly also in Judea, since it did not detract from

¹ See Matt. 12, 17-18.

the glory of that province of having given birth to the Son of David. And besides, the Prophet had, a year before, cleansed the House of "His Father," and had begun his teaching in that most favored province.

Under these conditions the efforts of the leaders had to be strained to their utmost to keep the popular enthusiasm in check, and "something had to be done" to prevent the collapse of the rule of the Pharisees. With this end in view, the chief priests had ordered the arrest of Jesus, and the convocation of the Sanhedrim.

Joseph Caiphas, the president of the Great Council, was not an old man, and lacked the matureness of counsel, and the prudence of direction, so necessary for the incumbent of the highest office of the entire Jewish world. He was ambitious beyond bounds, and impetuous beyond reason. His lordly bearing and his domineering manner should have estranged from him the minds of the older and cooler, had it not been that he was the exponent of the sum of all the envy and hatred accumulated in the individual hearts against that most dangerous "usurper," Jesus of Nazareth," who did not hesitate to accept divine homage, and to support his claim to it by all manner of miraculous deeds! If things have come to such a pass, they must either abdicate or they must remove him — fools that they were! There was another evident alternative: or we too must accept him for what he has not only claimed, but also proved himself to be, the Messiah of the Lord; for the Lord of hosts could not accord him His own power for the confirmation of a blasphemous imposition.

After much wrangling and ranting the meeting was about to end without producing definite results, when the arrival of Ben Hadassah was announced. Three Scribes were deputed to meet him in the court and receive his report. But when they returned with the announcement that Jesus had not been apprehended, Caiphas adjourned the session,

and commanded the neglectful officer to be brought in. Ben Hadassah selected three of his men for company, and presented himself before the high priest.

Caiphas, frowning with ill-suppressed resentment, opened the hearing:

"Why have ye not brought him?" But Ben Hadassah, who exercised admirable control over himself, stood erect, proud as the gigantic cedar in the storm, and answered with cool dignity:

"This man Jesus of Nazareth is not an enemy of the nation, and he is, beyond doubt, a prophet: he fixed his eyes on some of these men, who were present at his sermon" (pointing out some of the priests and scribes) "and then on me, in the midst of his discourse, and cried out: 'Why do ye go about to kill me?' No man ever spoke like this man."¹

And Caiphas stormed at him: "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed in him? But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed!"

At this juncture, Nicodemus arose.

"Doth our law judge any man," he objected, "before it hear him, and know what he doeth? Why would ye put him in prison and in bonds, when ye have no cause against him? He preacheth publicly in the Temple: let any master in Israel stand against him, and refute his doctrine, and deny his deeds!"

Now the storm broke; and in the confusion Ben Hadassah departed, smiling imperiously, and disdaining even to bid farewell by as little as a courteous obeisance. But Caiphas had not overlooked the haughty demeanor of his tool; he followed him to the door of the council hall with eyes bespeaking the reprobation of the rebellious captain of the highwaymen. And like the blows of many whips did

¹ See John, 7, 45-53.

ubiquitous abuse fall on the shoulders of the unfortunate Nicodemus:

“Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet!”

And amid general confusion the council was dismissed.



While his enemies were weaving their net, Jesus again sat in the Temple teaching the people, who were thronging the open places, and filled every nook and corner, eager to hear him. The enthusiasm of the feast-days was swelling every breast, and broke out here and there in a rapturous “Halleluiah! Hail to the Son of David!” A subdued murmur of delight rose and fell over the festive masses, like the hum of a distant procession of pilgrims chanting their even-song into the bosom of the quiet plain. At any moment it may burst forth in mighty accord, and carry these thousands away in its refrain.

The burden of his sermon was the Kingdom of God. For it they had sighed, as their fathers had, these two thousand years; after it they had longed and groped, the paradise of the vision of Isaiah: “The wilderness and the solitude shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and song; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.”¹ “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots; and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord — and he shall not judge after the sight of the eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of the ears; but he shall judge the poor with justice, and argue for the

¹ Isaiah, 35, 1-2.

meek of the earth with equity — and righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the cincture of his reins.”¹ “Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world: Say ye to the daughter of Sion: Behold, thy salvation cometh, behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him: and they shall call them ‘the Holy People,’ ‘the Redeemed of the Lord,’ and thou, Sion, shalt be called ‘the Elect,’ ‘The City not forsaken.’”²

The sound of these prophecies was ringing in his words, and their spirit hovering over his head. He spoke with animation, his beautiful face was lit up with the light of heavenly inspiration; his voice rang out with the power of the trumpet, and the sweetness of silver cymbals. He seemed to grow before the eyes of his hearers, until they were struck with awe at the majesty of his appearance. One word from his lips now would make him the King of Jerusalem. But he, when he had finished, dismissed his audience quietly, with a wave of his hand; and as he did so, a shadow of unutterable sadness overspread his features.

Among those who hung about the pillars in small groups, after the crowds had dispersed, was Miriam. She had diligently observed Ben Hadassah, who had returned, during the whole discourse as she had done earlier in the day, and was now following him at a distance of about ten paces, as he pressed nearer the fatigued Prophet. A new group was forming about the idolized teacher, who was moving away toward the inner arches of the court, where a dozen or more Pharisees, surrounded by a mob of curious idlers, were leading in a woman whose face alternately flushed and paled with anxiety and fear. Meeting Jesus, they stopped, and addressed him:

“Master, this woman was discovered in the very act of adultery. Now Moses in the Law commanded us that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?”

¹ Isaiah, 11, 1-5.

² Ibid. 62, 11-12.

How deftly they defer to his reputation among the people! They call him "Master," as if they also shared the popular enthusiasm over him, and they ask his sentence over the head of Moses! The conviction that he was come to fulfil the Law and the Prophets must have become well-nigh universal and unconquerable, when even his enemies feel safe against the charge of treason in appealing to his interpretation of the olden Law. They were not sincere, it is true, in their manifestations of respect and homage; but the fact that they dared to appeal from the Law to him proved that they were voicing a popular conviction.

But their proposition put the Master in a dangerous dilemma. If he discharges the woman, the Scribes and Pharisees have a pretext to accuse him, if not before the people, at least before the Great Council, of contempt of the religious law of the nation; if he condemns her, they will blight his renown for meekness and charity among his hearers and followers.

Miriam, who was personally interested in the issue of this question, for that she also sought forgiveness for public scandal, and dreaded the rigor of the Law, detected the trap instantly, and sought to catch the eyes of Jesus. She was so eager to learn his decision that she would anticipate it in the lines of his face, and was sorely disappointed when she beheld him stooping down and writing with his finger on the pavement, as if he had not heard the tempters. But they continued asking him, reminding him of his skill in teaching and of the eagerness of the people to accept and applaud his sentence. Miriam even almost forgot herself, and was on the point of joining the clamoring Scribes, when Jesus raised himself, and said, amid painful silence:

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. These words had the effect of a thunderbolt striking in

their midst. The Scribes and Pharisees, and even the curious onlookers, went out one by one, beginning with the eldest. Miriam slunk behind a pillar, Ben Hadassah turned his back upon the scene, and Jesus was alone with the trembling sinner.

When, therefore, he raised himself, and saw none but the woman, he said to her: "Woman, where are those that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee?"

She answered: "No man, Lord."

And Jesus absolved her: "Neither do I condemn thee." But he added gravely: "Go, and sin no more."

Had it not been for the presence of Ben Hadassah, who had again turned about and was with an air of surprise watching the beautiful Miriam hidden behind the pillar, she would also have flung herself at his feet and craved such easy pardon. But she was ashamed to cause a scene within sight of the man who must not know of her humiliation. She moved away from Ben Hadassah, whose gaze she thought was fixed upon her form, confident of his further attentions, once that he had taken such evident interest in her, as was bespoken by his surprise and wonder. But Ben Hadassah left the court without another look in her direction.



CHAPTER VII

A CAPTIVE

At the close of the feast-days, Miriam tarried in Jerusalem, instituting a quiet but careful search after the young officer, whose conduct and appearance fascinated her so completely that her new life was on the verge of ruin. But if the ground had swallowed him up, Ben Hadassah could not have more effectually vanished. The ordinary inhabitants, whom she questioned concerning him, did not know who he might be, and merely expressed the suspicion that he was not keeping good company, judging from the caution with which the rulers handled him. For although they employed him now and then on some desperate undertaking, yet they always relegated him to obscurity and oblivion as soon as he had finished his task. This time he had earned their severest rebukes, because he failed to apprehend Jesus; "And in this we do not find him worthy of blame," they would add, "for Jesus is a good Man."

Miriam resolved to visit Nicodemus, that Pharisee who spoke kindly of the Prophet. He must know more of Ben Hadassah. But when Nicodemus unexpectedly called at her quarters, evidently for the purpose of holding another interview with the relatives of Jesus, and Miriam made bold to inquire concerning the officer, he also was unable to say more than that he was a captain among the Zealots, a good and trustworthy youth, and of late an intimate friend of Caiphas; "but," he added, "I fear me, he has given grievous offense by his neglect. At all accounts, he has disappeared out of sight, as completely as the owl in midday." Miriam

knew from this ungracious comparison that Nicodemus was as little in sympathy with the captain's profession as the common people. "His name is, in reality," he continued, "*Gad Ben Hadassah*"; but there is a mystery about this name, as an honorable man would bear the name of his father,—if he has a father,—and the name of his mother only in defiance of law and custom. Caiphas knows his name, but would not reveal it; as he knows also his antecedents. The young man strides with a burdensome pride: there is an unholy mystery about him."

Miriam was so confused that she did not know what reply to make. The premonition that in him she should once more face her neglected lover was so clear that it bewildered her senses. If he was what she suspected, the leader of the highwaymen, he would spend most of his time in the open, and be inured to a life of hardships, than which none were more likely to work the physical and mental development which was so plainly the result of constant exercise and unrestrained liberty, following a period of indolence and effeminacy. Gaddiel was only twenty-two years old; and it often happens in the lives of young men, that at a favorable turn in their mode of life they shoot up and expand to the size of men in the space of a few months. But if Ben Hadassah was Gaddiel, the castaway, the prodigal, would he now accept her honest love? She confessed to herself that now she loved him, if he were *Gad Ben Hadassah*. She had undergone a purification of heart; she had attained to a strict control over her wild fancies; she longed to be honorable and pure once more.

Yet she was full of misgivings about her relation towards God.

Jesus of Nazareth, who insisted so strongly, so unremittingly, on repentance, had not yet even looked at her. He had forgiven the adulteress; but what fire of contrition had glowed out of her eyes when they placed her before him,

what burden of humility had weighed her down, what torrents of bitter tears had streamed down her face! She seemed like a child in tears over a fault, committed in haste, confronted with an outraged but forgiving father. And Miriam had not had the heart to crave his forgiveness. Step by step it became apparent to her that her conversion was not yet completed; and still she was about to court new dangers.

When she made no answer, but seemed distracted and embarrassed, Nicodemus continued: "If thou wouldst learn more of Gad Ben Hadassah, ask the Master, or one of his disciples; I heard Judas, the Keriothite, speak to the rulers of him, that they should not put too much faith in him, 'as he is,' he said, 'also of Galilee.' And let me assure thee," Nicodemus added confidentially, "I would put no faith in Judas."

Repugnant though it must be to her to reopen communications with the governor whom she had dismissed in disgrace, yet she would consult him, as he now was the only person in sight who had information of the whereabouts of Gaddiel-Ben Hadassah. The other disciples of the Prophet surely did not know him, and she would not think of accosting the Master himself with such inquiry. But when she searched for Judas, they told her that he had fled from the wrath of the Pharisees, whom he had insulted in the porch of Solomon. She was at a loss what to do next, and regretted that Omer, that silent badger, was not with her. He would ferret out Gad's hiding-place, and bring him to her by violence, if necessary. Hence she resolved to return to her estate in Galilee by easy stages, keeping watch on the incidents of the journey. And after another day of fruitless search, when she heard that Jesus of Nazareth was also departing into the region of Gennesar, she gathered her retinue, and started out for home.

Miriam was standing with the rest of the people between simple faith and pharisaical imposition. She could not see

clearly between Jesus of Nazareth and the leaders. A new light was dawning upon Israel: this was certain; the atmosphere was impregnated with it. But whether it was to be a regeneration or an illusion like former "Reformations," she could not divine. The Prophet of Nazareth spoke in the spirit and language of the psalmists and the prophets of old; and the leaders spoke in the language of a doubting age. He spoke of God, and redemption from sin; they shouted about Israel, and the delivery from the bondage of Rome. Both forms were desirable; but which was the one to be wrought as the most natural? These thoughts beset her idle hours. The Prophet's life was as strictly in accord with his teachings, as that of the Pharisees with theirs; but the Prophet's teaching savored more of the salutary doctrine of the fathers and prophets of old, than that of the Pharisees: it was nobler, and inculcated a worship more worthy of the Lord of Heaven. It required greater sacrifice of self and substance of its votaries, but it also held out more hope, and securer hope, of a lasting reward. But it insisted so obstinately on regeneration from sin through repentance! "Unless ye do penance, ye shall all be lost together," was the burden of the Prophet's message. "Follow me!" he said so frequently, and, of a truth, his path was not strewn with roses! The poor and lowly understood and appreciated his word, because they realized that, keeping it, it lightened their burden. The opulent and proud neglected and hated it, because it was their condemnation. *Stewards* they were to be, of their riches, not owners! But this was heretical, and incited to rebellion: hence the hatred of the rulers, the Scribes and Pharisees, and hence the universal opposition.

How could she make a safe choice? But she must first find Gad Ben Hadassah; a man hath sounder sense than a woman in love.

The one thought, therefore, which occupied her mind

unceasingly, and above the visions of love, as a lone star occupies the pellucid vault of heaven with its quiet radiance, was the thought of the "Kingdom of Heaven" which Jesus preached with the absolute confidence of infallibility. It was near, according to John the Baptist; but Jesus said: "It is within you." And he said, too, that it was the "Dominion of the Father," the government of God. This would reestablish the pristine theocracy of Israel, and extend it over the earth; for according to common report, he had promised also the Samaritans, that they should adore the Father in spirit and in truth. Hence the idea of the new Kingdom of God required of them an expanding of their hearts, in order to admit the newly chosen and redeemed children of God into the coveted communion of the worship of the one true God. Miriam understood well enough that this teaching was a stumbling block to the leaders, and an enigma to the people, and that the exploitation of this difficulty, set up before the people, would become the most dangerous weapon in the hands of the Scribes and Pharisees against the Prophet. He showed the people bread, and the leaders would pronounce it a stone. Their fathers had once before been scandalized at the mysterious heavenly bread, and had persisted in their offense, calling it "Man-hu," "What is it?"¹ And the children of those stiff-necked sires could easily be led to reject the new Bread come from heaven, the new doctrine of this Man, of whom so many have already said: "Who is he? Is he not the son of the carpenter?"

As they descended the eastern slope of Mount Olivet, Miriam sent word ahead to the leader of the caravan to turn toward Bethania. She had decided to pay a visit to her sister Martha. But on the way they were warned that Jesus had taken lodgings there, and they followed the northern road. Miriam could not muster sufficient courage to meet him face to face. But when she asked herself why she

¹The Manna of the desert.

dreaded his presence, she could not answer her own question, except by this, that he was so strange a man that she would not know how to conduct herself under his eyes to win his favor and approval. The reality of his presence, enhanced by his activity, was so different from her dreams. At heart she loved him, desired him, adored him; but with that impotent love with which she also loved the light of the sun, that ever lay playfully about her, but could never be owned by her exclusively. She delighted in the memory of her first dream of him, snuggling in mind into his arms, embracing him, and victoriously fleeing with him, albeit his captive. Only that bloody vision, in which she beheld him raised up above the earth, and herself, wet with his blood, at his feet — Ah! the red rose, the Wild Rose of Gan-Sar! How her second dream was a copy of the first, a glorious morning born of a gleaming dawn!

From what she had learnt from him in Jerusalem, he may some day become the Great Shepherd. His self-assertion, certainly, was heroic in its unflinching consistency and steadfastness. He would ever, instead of yielding to the persecutions and the threats of the leaders against this claim of unity with God, adduce new and more stringent proof, work new signs, more stupendous than the preceding, and unfold a new mystery in his doctrine. Their contentions against him appeared to her, in her deep reflections, like the expostulations of a peasant with storm-angered heaven; the louder the scolding, the more vivid and brilliant the flashes and flames, and the more sonorous the thundering response. She realized that they had already lost their game against him. Lightning will bear no fetters, and thunder no muzzle. Jesus of Nazareth did appear to her to be approaching the figure which she had seen in her dreams, the Victor, but stained with his own blood; for if he could not yield, they would not relent. But if her dream was prophetic, as the dreams of Joseph, was she then not also to be stained with

his blood? Was she not also to be among his spoils? She was startled, when this conclusion tugged at her heart-strings; and as she brushed over her eyes with a hand, she tried to scatter the thoughts that had unwittingly kept her sorry company so long.

On their way to Jericho, whence they would take the Damascene road that leads straight through Gennesar, she passed the spot where Gaddiel had killed his horse, and in his madness had consigned her to the tender mercies of the night, forlorn, half-dead with fright, and yet, all wicked. What depths had she waded through since that terrible night: and what a change had been wrought in her! She thanked God with a pious sigh for her deliverance.

Now the recollection of her cruelty toward Thamar again gnawed at her heart. It was legal, it was necessary; yet it was inhuman. The poor child might have been sheltered and comforted in some remote spot on her large estate, but for the severe application of the law. She could not have added another sin to her growing burden — what hypocrisy the human heart may not harbor! But now she felt the whole soreness of her soul over such cruel necessity. She seemed to herself to have again become a rebel against the paternal laws, even while she was working her reconciliation; but law or no law, the protest of her heart against the cruelty toward one she loved and respected would not be silenced. She would redeem herself nobly from this slavery of law and self on her return. God could not wish her to be cruel to one of his creatures, so frail, so tender, and in such dire distress! And she would not shrink from ministering to her — Oh! this resolve came so hard, so slowly; just like the leaves of oaks in spring! But she would not fear contagion; if leprosy was the punishment for sin, as the teachers taught, it would not touch her, for she had forsaken sin. Ay, but was that child a sinner? Why was she so sorely afflicted, a maiden pure and winsome, innocent and modest,

a mere child in thought and manner? — But she was of the Gentiles, a stranger to the children of Abraham, a fit object of the anger of God!

Yet this easy solution was no longer satisfactory to her mind, kindled as it was with a new fire, the light of the new doctrine. Had not Jesus reproved those who brought him news of those whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, and said: “Think ye that these Galileans were sinners above all Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all perish together. Or those eighteen, upon whom fell the tower of Siloam and slew them; think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but unless ye repent” — the terror of the repetition! — “ye shall all likewise perish.”¹ “Hence I must conclude,” she said to herself, “that we all deserve punishment, unless we repent. I shall observe him, and learn the way of true repentance,” she concluded her reflections.

They were now only about an hour’s ride from the first villas of Jericho, and descending rapidly into the blooming plain of the Jordan. The men allowed their beasts the pleasure of a gallop, and were soon ahead of the women, and fast drawing away from them. There was not more danger here than in the city itself. Miriam fell behind with Hannah, who would never leave her side. Their guards had easily gained a thousand paces when two men, well mounted, and armed, suddenly appeared from a copse of blooming vines and young sycamores, and each grasping the reins of either mount led the two women away back into the wilderness without a word. Miriam was too surprised to cry out, and Hannah uttered her grief after her own manner in short sobs and wails, like a spoiled child crying despite its happiness. She was not afraid; she was excited. She had little to lose; and an adventure would break the

¹ Luke, 13, 4.

monotony of this wearisome and silent journey of the last four hours.

After about two hours' sharp riding through difficult winding paths, they stopped before a roughly composed huge stone structure which stood, like a sentinel, at the opening of a deep hollow. Steep hills surrounded the depression completely; and where they stood apart, like the ends of an open ring, the rugged fortress was posted as a gate. One of the highwaymen — for such they evidently were — uttered a shriek so much like the uncanny hoot of the soft-winged bird of night that the women's hair crept on their heads from horror. The same cry came in response from the turret, which surmounted the front wall, and the next minute the iron bolts, which released the stout double door, grated out a weird welcome. Now Hannah also was filled with dread and terror, and it cost the robbers stronger methods of persuasion than that of words to compel her to enter the dark, cavern-like gate. Miriam had expostulated with her captors before, and threatened to set all the soldiers of Judea on them, unless they released her, but their only answer was that they made her ride between them, one riding ahead and the other in the rear, the latter having tied the halter of Hannah's, the former that of Miriam's, mount to his saddle. Miriam was riding Chuza, the beautiful Syrian mare, the gift of Gaddiel, and could easily have outridden the robbers, had she had the opportunity to escape, or had she been heartless enough to leave Hannah alone in their hands. As there was no alternative now, however, but to submit patiently to this violence, and as she had resolved to submit to nothing but the violence of iron and death, her spirits rose, and she assumed her wonted courage. She shuddered, true, as she rode into those jaws of darkness; but she rode erect, and although her pride faltered a little, yet she would die, she had resolved, before she would bear with any coming indignities to her person.

She had asked herself on the way, why these men did not take her money, of which she was carrying a generous sum on her saddle, and let her go her way; and why they did not set Hannah free, from whom nothing was to be expected but tears and wailing. She had also thought of Ben Hadassah: he had paid marked attention to her in the Temple when he fixed his curious gaze on her, and may have followed her movements, only to pick her up quietly, and have her taken to his mountain retreat. Then she would have to have a maid. "Behold," she had said, "there is the mystery of this adventure!" And the thought had brought enough comfort to keep the wells of her tears sealed.

Once through the gate and the dark passage that led through the tower, they entered into a court from which a complete view could be had of the interior of this natural fortification. The surrounding elevations formed a wreath of verdure and bloom around the pit below. The bottom of the depression was filled with horses and mules, frisking about in play, or quietly grazing along the edges. But the lower part of the wall of this pit was composed of huge irregular boulders between which the sturdy terebinth and tamarisk had planted a foot, concealing with their drooping branches its formidable aspect. This place was impregnable to any force, save that of an earthquake.

Running right and left from the rear gate along the sides of the hills were sheds, partly constructed by hand, partly prepared by nature in the shape of caverns and caves; but rock and crags everywhere. Here the men dismounted and lifted the women out of the saddle. At a cry, a man appeared seemingly out of the bowels of the earth, to take the reins of the four beasts together, and lead them away into a stable. Then the four, captors and captives, reentered the frowning guard house.

At the first cross-passage they were received by a silent watchman bearing a torch, who preceded them down a

passageway, until they reached another gate. Here he gave the torch to one of the captors, and walked away again, back to his post in the darkness. All this time not a word had been spoken. Hannah was nearly distracted with excitement, and clung helplessly to the courageous Miriam. But Miriam also had the pallor of fearsome expectation on her cheek.

The gate opened as if by magic. But when the two women looked forward, and saw that the passage from the gate led down into the earth, they recoiled with terror, and upon their captors' laying their hands on them to gently lead them forward, they sank to the ground, crying and protesting. The stalwart braves, however, were deaf to all protests, and simply raised them up, and carried them down bodily. The torchbearer had extinguished the light, and the darkness was now doubly oppressive. The screams of the women echoed like mockery out of the deep gorge into which they were descending, and Hannah fell into a dead swoon. Miriam breathed heavily, and cold sweat covered her brow. Her heart seemed to have stopped beating; she became cold and numb. If only either of these terrible men would speak a word to advise her of the nature of her impending fate! But this terror of darkness, and this dreadful silence!

At last they regained level ground, and Miriam saw at a distance a gleam of light shooting out from the side of the vault. There the low passageway must broaden out and rise to the size of a large house. The light was too faint to fill the entire space, and revealed only large blotches of soot-begrimed rock on the top and sides of the immense dark cavern. She also heard the rolling echo of shouts, of muffled talking, and of peals of coarse laughter. The light grew stronger, the echo rang out more distinctly, and the noise became louder, as they neared the yawning gate.

The scene that met Miriam's wondering gaze was

bewildering. The opening from which the light streamed was a huge entrance to a space as high and large as the Court of Solomon in the Temple, she thought at first sight. But as the dimness of the distance retreated before her upon her being conducted in, the hall stretched farther and farther back into new darkness. The vault overhead was so high that it looked like clouds, tinged here and there with a blush from the torches and fires which lit up the lair. There were more than a hundred men, young, middle-aged, and old, assembled in various groups, lounging about the several fires, eating and drinking and jesting. Far back in the very shadow of the outer darkness was a group as quiet and sober as the rest were noisy and hilarious. At the head of what might be called a table of stone was seated Ben Hadassah, in earnest conversation with a dozen grizzly-headed men, one of whom, who was almost white, and whose skin bore the dull gray color of the stones and the ground around, occupied the place of honor at his right. All the men of this group, except the "Patriarch," as they called the hoary-headed one, were encased in coats of mail, made of small steel rings, and wore their swords and daggers on their belts. Their silver and steel mounted and rimmed headpieces, without shield, and with a backpiece ample enough to cover the neck and part of the shoulders, were lying in a row on a stone bench beside the table. They presented the appearance of pieces of practical head-gear rather than of helmets for parade. Yet the good taste of the sparing ornamentation indicated that their owners were the captains of the various bands in this retreat.

Before the women entered — Hannah had been revived by her conductor, who poured a cup of wine down her throat, and dashed another into her face — the conversation of this group had been quite animated. Ben Hadassah had been made the object of many loud congratulations, and as many silent curses, as the result of startling visions of the future

ascendency of the young captain, conjured up by the "Patriarch" with his narrative of a reminiscence of the heydays of his own life. It related to Anna, the prophetess, whose name was still honored for her piety in her days. She had for forty years fasted and prayed, and visited the Temple every day, telling those who admired her devotion that she would yet behold the Expectation of Israel. And one day, now thirty-one years ago, when Shemaiah (the Patriarch) was himself still in the aftercrop of his manhood, and captain of the Temple guard, she was found singing a canticle of joy to the "Redeemer, the Light of the World, whom her eyes did behold," before the altar of God. The word was passed around through the courts, that Anna had been made worthy of a vision from heaven; and when she passed out, "I asked her," the Patriarch had related, "concerning what she was said to have seen. But she answered in ecstasy that she had borne the Savior in her arms, and had kissed him. That time I did not put faith in her words, seeing that she was transported out of her senses. But a moon later, when I found her dying on the steps of Solomon's Porch, she astonished me with a prediction made in full consciousness, and with all the manifestations of divine inspiration: 'I see a tree planted on the head of the city, bearing the fruit of life — I see a stone rolling down a high mountain, and crushing the city and the Temple into dust — I see a new sun rise in the firmament, that shall not set until the end cometh. I see Him reject the Bride, the Daughter of Sion, and espouse unto himself a Bride all fair and without blemish.' After these words she arose with my assistance, and I led her to her home in the cloister. When I gave her in charge of her sisters, she took my hand, and said, looking into the depths of my soul: 'Shemaiah, thou and thy young friend shall see Him, and keep Him company in His last conflict with the powers of hell; thou shalt go down with Him, never more to rise, but the other shall go down

and remain in paradise. There shall be planted two more trees with the Tree of Salvation right and left; but one beareth no fruit, because it is planted in darkness.”” In those days, he continued, “I had a young friend in Jerusalem, the only man, whom I did call friend, who sought my only daughter in marriage. I surveyed the scores of men of my acquaintance, and having ascertained that none other was a friend in truth, I killed the boy, in order to make void the prophecy. And I killed the maiden also, because she was pining away for the desire of her lover, and had pronounced a malediction on my bones. I have oft repented: the damsel was distracted with grief, but I strangled her in the covering of her sleep. I have not had a friend since that day, and I would again thrust my dirk into the heart of him who would be a friend to me.””

All eyes had been directed toward Ben Hadassah, even those of the “Patriarch,” when he gave this grawsome assurance. The former had often given proof of the esteem in which he held the old man, and the latter could not deny in his heart that he loved Ben Hadassah, especially as the name of his ill-fated daughter had been Hadassah. But the grim humors of Shemaiah had never suffered an approach to his sympathies on the part of the dexterous young captain. He knew that Shemaiah had been the tenant of this lair for at least thirty years, and that it was he who opened it for the persecuted patriots. The stone fortress had been built in the time of Judas, the Maccabee; but the caves and passages in the mountain were rediscovered and explored by Shemaiah, when he fled from the bailiffs of the Great Council after the murder of his own child.

Then Ben Hadassah had replied:

“Who is he with whom thou shalt go down?””

And Shemaiah had resumed:

“I shall not go down with him unless I have a friend; my friend is dead — therefore, I shall not go down, never-

more to rise; I shall not go to hell! But he, of whom Anna spoke, is —” he stopped, as if choking at the name.

“Jesus of Nazareth!” Ben Hadassah blurted out; “he is the Prophet of the prophets, without doubt; but if he be also the Anointed of the Lord, then may the Lord be merciful to His people, for Joseph Caiphas will not rest until he have this Messiah put away! Ye know that he desired me to apprehend him in the Temple, and that I declined to lay my hands on him; he is a holy man, and carrieth the unfortunate and the lowly in his heart. But he disagreeth with the rulers, and for this he must die.”

“It is he,” the Patriarch continued; “I was in the city when the Eastern princes asked his place of birth, and the scribes read it out of the roll of Micah, and sent them to Bethlehem. It was he whom Anna and Simeon extolled amid the jeers of the levites in the Temple; it is he whose lips teem with the tenderness of Isaiah, whose voice thunders with the anger of Jeremiah, whose hands are filled with good gifts, whose feet shall tread the wine-press, and whose garments shall be bespattered with blood. It is he on whom they shall look with awe after they have pierced him: but he is not to be our King! He pays tribute to Cæsar with Cæsar’s coin, and extends his hand over the Samaritans and the Phenicians. Away with him! I shall not go down with him!”

It would have been pitiful, had not his ferocity provoked disgust, to see the old man in such despair. He was evidently fighting in vain against the growing conviction that the prophecy was yet to be fulfilled, despite his cruelty and fear.

“But,” one of his companions had resumed, “if he is to be our King, it would honor thee to ‘go down’ with him in victory, and thou shouldst rejoice in thy part of the conflict that will reestablish the throne of David. The dead do not return — why wouldst thou rise again?”¹

¹ The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

The Patriarch walked away into the darkness of a neighboring cave, and returning immediately, unrolled a parchment which they recognized from the characters on the case, from which he drew it, as the book of Isaiah. Throwing the lengths of several leaves across the stone table, he placed his finger on a passage, and read aloud, after scanning every face about him to ensure attention:

“‘He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he hath done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.’”¹

Then he rolled up the book again, and put it away. Returning he stood before his silent companions, and spoke with cold soberness: “This is the description of the King that Jesus of Nazareth will make us. ‘He shall be buried with the wicked’ — behold how truly Anna spoke! If he be the Messiah, then either the prophet has falsely interpreted his vision, or the new kingdom of Israel is not of this world. And if it is of the other world, he that ‘goes down with him in the conflict, nevermore to rise,’ goes down into hell! I have paged this roll for thirty years in order to rid myself by a new discovery of the fearful burden of my predicted damnation: but if Jesus of Nazareth be the Prisoner of Isaiah, our whole people will be lost to him and his kingdom, and I will not fight for him, even if a day of glory dawn upon him!”

Ben Hadassah, who had seen and heard more than anyone present of Jesus of Nazareth, was depressed in spirit at

¹ Isaiah 53, 7-10.

the view into the future opened by this vision of the ancient prophet. What if they would anticipate the conflict between Rome and Jerusalem, and hold the Kingdom ready for the King at his first public manifestation? Then the prophecy might assume a new aspect under new conditions: the prediction of the suffering of the Messiah in his own person might turn into a prediction of his suffering in the persons of those who were to be his own in the new kingdom, prepared by them amid much fighting and bloodshed. He bade Shemaiah take up again his place in the council of war, and began to unfold his plan:

"Brethren in arms," he said, "God's word and the tide of the sea will not be repressed. The Messiah must suffer and die. That Jesus of Narazeth is the Messiah, in whom all the words of the Scriptures are being fulfilled, we, who have our ear upon the heart of the nation, have come to believe without further hesitation. But it is also said of him: 'The Lord saith to my Lord: sit at my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy foot-stool. The sceptre of thy power shall the Lord send forth out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thy enemies. With thee is the principality in the day of thy strength: in the brightness of the saints: from the womb I begot thee before the day-star. The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent: Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech. The Lord at thy right hand hath broken Kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among nations, he shall fill ruins: he shall crush the heads in the land of many. He shall drink out of the torrent in the way: therefore shall he lift up his head.'¹ Now, if in the vision of Isaiah he must die, in the vision of David he liveth, and reigneth with strength and power over all the nations of the earth. How can he die, and yet live to reign? These prophecies are a forewarning for us: if his people reject him, he shall die, and his glory shall never

¹ Ps. 109 (110).

become manifest, but shall go down with him into the earth, and with it the nation shall be buried forever; but if the nation accept him, there shall be no end of his reign, and no bound to his empire. We have even a type of this developing history in the deliverance of our fathers out of the bondage of Egypt: had they not murmured against Moses, and made themselves an adulterous god, they would have entered this land of peace and plenty after a short journey of forty days, instead of erring about in the wilderness until a new generation had matured. And Nineveh was threatened conditionally; she repented and was spared. And the Lord hath made a promise to David that his seed shall remain forever, if they walk in His ways: Now we have no King born of our nation, and are the slaves of the Gentiles for our sins.

"Therefore, brethren, it seems meet to me, that we turn aside the anger of the Lord, and prepare a simultaneous uprising throughout the land for the day of his manifestation. The Galileans are easily won, and the Judeans will join hands with us, if not for the ambition of placing our own King once more upon the throne of David, at least for the hatred they bear the Romans. The rulers in Judea will not be with us, as they would lose their offices and possessions in an abortive rebellion; but we may proceed under cover. I would detail six captains for the campaign in Galilee, and retain eight in Judea, sending other six into the Decapolis and the region beyond the Jordan. A score of brave and prudent men can change the face of the country in one year. What think ye?"

The "Patriarch" had listened with evident unrest, and now rejoined bitterly: "Hast thou not also read: 'Therefore my heart hath been glad, and my tongue hath rejoiced: moreover my flesh also shall rest in hope, because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; nor wilt thou let thy Holy One see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life, thou shalt fill me with joy with thy countenance: at thy

right hand are my delights even to the end.'¹ Even if they kill him, he shall rise and judge the world. Upon whom he falleth, he shall crush him. It is the end of the nation! Leave him to his fate, lest ye also will go down to hell with him, nevermore to rise."

These words of despair instantly dampened the ardor in the breasts of the younger men, who now began to suspect Ben Hadassah of royal ambitions. They would rejoice in the leadership of such a noble king as the proud Galilean would undoubtedly represent. But for the present, thinking that they had detected a weakness in his character, they twitted him with humorous allusions to his youth, and brought out the three hundred wives and six hundred concubines of Salomon for his confusion. Ben Hadassah, however, was not confused. He saw that the words of Shemaiah had destroyed every vestige of his plans, and joined in the bantering as freely as his colleagues.

At this turn of their consultation, audible silence seemed to ripple through the rock-chamber, stilling the noise in each group in succession, until all sound, save the crackling of the flames, had died away. Miriam was being led through the glare to the captain's table. Her pale face with its marble-like fineness and composure appeared like that of a specter. For the space of a minute or two the silence was intense. Then low whispering followed in her wake, until she was presented at the place where her arrival had been known and expected. With one accord the young men in this group shouted suddenly: "Hail to the Queen! Hail to our King!" and then rose to their feet and emptied their bumpers to their salutation.

Now all the men drew up around this group, and the array of their numbers accentuated the depth of the cavern; for although the outer circle was cast in gray darkness, yet the walls seemed to have receded farther still.

¹ Ps. 15, 9-11.

Those not in direct communication with Ben Hadassah were curiously eying the fair prisoner, and those initiated in the secret of this capture were anxious as to the issue. Ben Hadassah had only confided the fact of the capture of the wealthiest woman of Gennesar to them, but reserved to himself what disposition he would ultimately make of her person. They knew that he had a plan beyond that of stripping her of her money, if indeed this was his intention at all, for she could have been robbed in open daylight. Miriam was known far and wide through Galilee as a renegade from national customs and laws, and hence had long fallen under the ban of the Zealots. Any violence against her person and substance was deemed permitted, as long as it was carried out in secret. At all events, her lack of patriotic spirit furnished a justification for her apprehension by these self-constituted guardians of the national weal, and a pretext for their leader to kidnap the most beautiful woman of Gennesar, and keep her in confinement within his reach. Several of the younger men betrayed signs of envy in their eager and astonished looks. She stood before the leader, motionless, her arms lightly folded under her breast, and her hands laid in the crooks of the elbows with all the appearance of unconcern possible, looking up at her apparent judge with eyes as clear and quiet as the stars of heaven. She had been outraged, frightened, humbled. Had Ben Hadassah in person taken her from the highway, she would have forgiven the indignity, for she had loved him before this night, and would willingly have followed him into the bowels of this mountain to be his wedded wife. But now she neither loved nor hated him; she despised him, and feared nothing at his hands as much as a repetition of her former struggle against his advances. She would die, but not yield. Ben Hadassah's cold eyes, however, did not forbode an attempt on her womanly privileges. His object must lie deeper, his intention further back. As she

unflinchingly met his stern gaze, she remembered the incident of Gaddiel's cloak, sent back to his father; for this man was Gaddiel Ben Simon. The flitting shadows, fanned hither and thither by the flames of the torches and fires, and now and again for a moment enveloping his head, destroyed the halo that the sunlight and the atmosphere of liberty had thrown around it in the streets of Jerusalem, when he could bid proud defiance to everyone in sight, under the wings of the omnipotent high priest. Here he was among his equals, or, in point of service and merit, beneath his betters. This consciousness reduced the tumidness of his pride, and brought him down to the level of his little self. Miriam's look of unconcern soon changed to a look of disdain, and when at last he opened his lips to ask her: "Woman, knowest thou who I am, to whom now thou must give an account of thy sin?" her lips parted with a smile of sorrowing recognition; but she remained silent. He repeated: "Woman, knowest thou me?" Now she replied: "The giver of Chuza, the Syrian steed!"

This unexpected answer intimated that he was equally guilty, if it was a sin for her, to desert the national traditions, and to live riotously, and discomfited the questioner for the moment. The men, who were near enough to understand their words, chuckled to themselves, and patted their knees with pleasure at the woman's cleverness.

But Ben Hadassah resumed: "I am the captain of the patriots, who have sworn to root out in Israel all the false brethren. Thou hast been the accomplice of Herod in the murder of John; thou hast kept the company of the hirelings of Rome, and the princelings of Cæsar: thou art worthy of death."

Miriam stepped forward two or three steps and, raising her head toward him, answered: "Gad Ben Hadassah, thou hast not named all my transgressions: I have forsaken, not only the ceremonies and customs of the Jews, but the Law

of God: ‘I want mercy, and not sacrifice’; I have not only kept the company of hirelings and princelings, but even of the son of a Pharisee, whom I taught sin when he sought instruction; I have cast forth a poor leper from my estates, and fled in blind terror from a work of love; I saw the head of John — and the sight moved my heart; I saw the face of sin unmasked at Herod’s banquet, and the sight sickened me unto despair: I was steeped in wickedness to suffocation, but the God of Israel will show mercy to a crushed heart, and will not despise the humbleness of a penitent soul. And do thou also turn from thy evil ways, for the end of sin is destruction.”

The impression made by such boldness and sincerity is indescribable. Gaddiel had turned purple and pale in quick succession, and the men murmured their approval with stifled voices. The leader saw at a glance that he could not proceed, as he had intended, in humiliating the haughty woman who had persistently rejected his love at a time when it was all his bliss and happiness. His men would not tolerate the persecution of this courageous and repentant sinner. They might not, perhaps, openly show signs of treason, but he would risk their respect and obedience, and his coveted position. He must face about.

Miriam had spoken with growing vehemence and oratorical intonation. At her last words she had bowed her head, and now stood motionless, awaiting the outbreak of his anger. But Ben Hadassah had already reached his decision. He assumed a tone of sympathy and meekness and replied:

“Then I will not crush thee, but forgive.” He wished to proceed, but was interrupted by Hannah, who had stood between her captors, full of fear, and now sprang forward, and cast herself at his feet, sobbing out her thanks upon his knees, which she embraced. The men cheered him and extolled his justice and kindness; and he enjoyed the scene

to the fulness of his vanity. After an instant of triumph he bade the maiden rise, and follow him with her mistress. The men stood aside before him, so as to form a double line, like a guard of honor, through which he passed, leading the way for the two captives, who thought that they were being conducted back to light and liberty. Ben Hadassah snatched up a torch in passing, which he lit on one of the fires, and preceded them into the darkness. After a short while they saw the wall ahead of them, a disordered mass of crags and ledges, and under a massive rock, a heavy door. Ben Hadassah opened it with a key taken from his bosom, and entered. They trembled on the threshold; the space ahead seemed doubly dark, and the atmosphere carried the smell of mold and mustiness. But after a moment they discovered that daylight, or rather the gleam of the starlit evening, peeped into it from a side passage at the opposite end. They entered, and he closed the heavy door behind them. Then he crossed over to the other end, dashed the torch on the ground so that it was extinguished, and turned into the side passage and disappeared from their view. For a moment now they could see distinctly that light was filtering through that opening; but the next moment it vanished. They groped their way to the spot, turned into the narrow passage and, reaching a low door, found it immovable. Ben Hadassah had left neither trace nor echo, and they found themselves in a prison so dark and drear that the terror of their new situation at first chilled their blood and paralyzed their tongues. And when they cried out, and sobbed and wept in despair, the high, hollow ceiling threw back the echo of their lament tenfold, and filled the cavern as with the wailings of the dying. Hannah tore her hair, and at last attacked Miriam in her ravings, tearing her garments and lacerating her face, arms, and breast. Miriam could scarcely defend herself from being strangled to death by the maniac. But after summoning all her inborn courage, she succeeded

in winding the poor maid in the strips of her cloak, and in laying her down. Hannah fell into spasms of moaning, which were repeated with brief interruptions throughout that terrible night.

But how long that night lasted, Miriam could not discern. It was always night in that cavern. But a ravening hunger reminded her that many hours must have fled since that dark gate closed upon them. Still there was no sign of approaching redemption, no sound, no ray of light; darkness tangible around and above them, and the stillness of the tomb. Were they buried alive to die of hunger and thirst? The thought almost maddened the brave Miriam with its sudden onslaught.

But whereas Hannah, the faint-hearted, was lying in despair, abandoned to the terrors of the situation, Miriam, with the last strength of her brave heart, rose above despair, and determined to liberate herself at any cost. She would not die with her hands in her lap.

Hence, ascertaining first that her helpless charge was well secured in her soft bonds, she proceeded to examine the door where they had entered. She found it to be made of stout planks: wood was not indestructible. She took up a stone and rapped hard against it in order to attract the attention of those in the cave, if, perhaps, they had not all departed. But the sound of the gate was so dull that she concluded the planks were laid double, and the intervening space was filled out with some dead substance. It would be vain to spend the precious hours between now and madness or death in the effort of seeking liberation by this silent gate. She turned away and went to the opposite gate. That also was of wood, but so stout that her blows against it sounded like footfalls on a hard road; it also was a dead door, and so closely fitted into the rocky entrance, that it seemed to be sealed.

No hope of escape from these artificial mouths of their grave!

Trembling with rising fear, she groped her way along the jagged wall; rock, torn asunder to all shapes and sizes, cavities, crevices, rifts, and rents, were all that met or eluded her nervous grasp. Once she found a cavity large enough for her to creep into on hands and knees. She must examine it. She hesitated a moment before she entered, whence there was no return, except backward, on her knees, if the passage was blind. But she entered, and bravely crept over the sharp stones. She felt her warm blood running over her hands; her knees also must be bruised. She could not tell how much of her garments had been left in the hands of the raving maiden, and how much had been torn away by the edges of the rock that reached out after her from every side. Suddenly she uttered a shriek: her hand had fallen on a skeleton.

She became dizzy with fright, and would have fainted, had her condition not been so much above the normal. But as soon as she recovered the power of motion, she returned through the narrow tunnel, and setting foot once more on the ground of her prison, she stood wringing her hands, and cried out: "O my God, have mercy on Thy handmaids, and send an angel to deliver us from this dungeon of death, even as Thou didst send an angel to deliver Daniel out of the mouth of the lions!" Hannah again began to moan, but so feebly that Miriam feared she was exhausted, and about to die. She went to her, and sitting down, laid the head of the maid against her own bosom, soothing her with tender words and caresses. Hannah, however, seemed to be recovering. She attempted to move her arms and, upon failing, asked Miriam to loosen the bands. Miriam was surprised at the calmness and clearness of her voice, and complied with the request. While she was unraveling the bands, Hannah said: "Loosen me, that I may once put my arms about my good mistress before I die." And when her arms were freed, she embraced and kissed Miriam with great

fervor and tenderness. But her arms sank slowly from the shoulders of her mistress, her head fell back — Miriam raised her up, spoke to her, patted her cheeks; all to no avail — Hannah was dead. Miriam was alone with a corpse in this hell of darkness and oblivion!

Of the hours, or days of despair and hunger, which followed the death of Hannah, Miriam had afterward only a very dim recollection. She remembered nothing but that she sat in silence for a long time with the dead body of her last friend clasped in her arms, seeking comfort even in the company of death, and that, when the body glided from her embrace, she cast herself upon it, and began to mutter the prayer she had often recited since the night after Herod's banquet: "Out of the depths have I cried to Thee, O Lord, Lord hear my voice." During the recitation of this psalm she lost consciousness, with the fearful certainty that here she must live with the dead a short while, and then also die, lost and alone.



CHAPTER VIII

DISAPPOINTED

IN the meantime Callidora had met with a disappointment so bitter that it almost blighted her hope of being cleansed from her dreadful disease, and shook her faith in the Prophet of Nazareth to the very roots. Her faith had grown out of reverence, respect, and love for him: and how coldly had he rejected her earnest and trustful pleadings for help!

On his journey to the feast of Tabernacles he had passed the gardens of Miriam, had even passed through them in the vicinity of the tower where she was lodging, had seen her kneeling apart from the roadside, pleadingly raising her hands, and entreating him with the same words which had on several occasions procured his help for other lepers: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" But he had passed on. She had followed him at a distance, and reiterated her prayer — but he had been deaf to her voice.

She was so sore and sick at heart over this rejection that she refused to eat for several days, and her father, who had been a witness to the rebuff, broke out in execrations and curses against him. But soon the deep religious sentiment of the child revived, and she devoted herself more earnestly than ever to the practice of self-abasement, patience and prayer. "He could have cleansed me," she would say to herself, "as he cleansed many others, and he did not dismiss me without hope; hence the fault must be mine, or he will choose a more suitable occasion. I will give myself over into his good pleasure, for he surely will yet cleanse me."

Her father left her after this failure of her only hope, and departed into Hauran, where the restless nomad tribes were preparing for an irruption into Jetur. That region was but meagerly garrisoned after the war of Herod against Hareth, and the border towns were without defense against the predatory hordes. Silas would offer his services as scout and spy, and divide the spoils with the marauders. His purse had become quite slender, and as Ben Hadassah had been appointed to the post of Bethphage, and that place laid under the ban of the Roman governor, he would have to open a new field of operation for himself. Among the Galilean patriots he had never been made wholly welcome on account of his lack of reverence for their Law and religion, which he was too insolent not to display on various occasions. But before he left his daughter, he earnestly charged Rapha with the care of her.

Rapha was a typical mountaineer in every fiber of his constitution: sturdy of figure, strong of limb, his thought as vigorous as the lines of his face, and his determination as unyielding as the muscles of his arms. Yet in one respect he betrayed the native of Judea: he was slow to wax warm over a new project or discovery; he lacked the Galilean enthusiasm. His figure had been steeled in the Galilean mountains, but his soul remained impervious to the splendor of the Galilean sun, and to the intoxication of the flower-scented atmosphere of Gennesar. Among the light-hearted groups of the swains and maidens of the "Prince's Garden," he appeared like a sober, somber rook among swarms of twittering swallows and cooing turtles. Even among the gray-headed sires of the blooming villages, he, the dark-haired younger councilman, seemed a dark and fruitless cedar, transplanted from the mountain crest among a group of ancient olives, gray with years, but yet crowned with the joy of shimmering foliage and laughing fruit.

When his Thamar — he would not take kindly to the

Greek Callidora — related the story of her disappointment to him, and wept to him in the first days of her blighted hope, he warned her stolidly: “Thou wert over-confident, my pet; new wine may easily sour before clearing. We have not yet seen the end of this new comet on the sky of Israel. There hath not appeared among us a true prophet since Malachy’s day; but there have been prophets, and sons of prophets galore, who have seen false and foolish things, and have misled the nation; doing great deeds and preaching speedy redemption: and yet, Israel even now is bearing a tighter yoke than in the days of Antiochus. If Jesus of Nazareth be not the Son of God in disguise, he is an impostor: for mortal man can now no more work the redemption of Israel. Rome hath muzzled the Lion of Judah and clipped his claws. If the Prophet of Nazareth wish to fulfil his promises of ushering in the reign of God, he must be the very Emmanuel.¹ Let him lift the yoke from the necks of the oppressed; let him raise the standard of Judah over the ensigns of the Gentiles; let him reestablish the throne of David, that the kings of the earth shall come and bow before him, and bring him tribute; let him banish disease and uncleanness from the land of our fathers, — let him cleanse thee, — and I also will believe in him! I shall see him go down as my father saw Judas² go down in disgrace.”

Callidora at first had not the courage to argue with him, although his reasons did not appeal to her as fathoming the depth of the Prophet’s mysterious appearance. They left the challenge of his wonderful deeds unanswered; they declined the proof of his holy life and doctrine; they eluded the aggression of the inhuman hatred of the scribes and Pharisees side by side with the reverential awe with which they watched his coming and going among the enthusiastic people. But in the first days after her crushing disappoint-

¹ Emmanuel — “With us (is) God.” Isaiah, 7, 14.

² Judas, “the Galilean.” Jos. Fl. J. War, B. 2, chap. 1 and chap. 17.

ment, her heart was too sore to rise to the height of triumphant defense of her Man-God.

The simplicity of her innocent soul had soon grasped the sublime idea realized in this Man. In her undisturbed meditations during the long months of her exile from the society of those whom she loved, in the dreary days spent in the complete seclusion of the hills of Rama, and lastly, during the year spent in concealment in the watch-tower of the vineyards, she had often gathered the bits of information gleaned from the pious teachings of her former master and mistress, from the lips of the maids in Miriam's mansion, and compared them leisurely with what her own eyes had seen, and her own ears had heard, of the Prophet of Nazareth. His personality was to her so plainly the mysterious figure which the prophets of old had drawn in outline, that she often wondered at the slowness of men to understand and accept him. But his pitiless neglect of her humble prayer had grated so harshly on her love that it had stunned her confidence and faith in him. From that shock she recovered as slowly as a flower nipped by a spring frost: the tender petals and leaves thus injured must wither and fall while new blossoms are budding forth, fresher and purer, and more fragrant than the first.

One evening as Rapha was sitting with her on a terrace of the upper garden overlooking the beautiful lake at the edge of this rioting wilderness of bloom, color, perfume, and light, about the hour of sunset, and her stolid companion caught the breath of the loveliness that surrounded them, and opened his heart and lips for a little while, she questioned him, taking him off his guard, as it were, concerning his erstwhile friend, Judas; whether he were still with the good Master? Rapha, with his forty years of well-born vigor and activity, must know more about the Master than he had yet thought convenient to reveal. She would tempt him out of his reserve from a side where his customary fear of compromising his

orthodoxy was not on guard; let him tell of Judas, whom he owed no love!

He took the bait. The pleasure of bathing in this glorious sunlight and of having this intoxicating atmosphere fan his temples astir with the pulsations of the deepest heart wells, now and then falling out of rhythm with the tremor of his smitten heart, was too much to suppress, even for stubborn Rapha. Callidora, who had wasted very little in this long time of her disease, seemed to him to have been transformed into a wraith; so translucent was her face, so luminous her eyes, so soft her touch, so light her gait. Were it not for the terrible affliction, he would even now take her unto himself, and make a home for her. And it seemed so strange to him that he never doubted she would yet be cleansed, and he would rejoice to make her his wife.

These musings softened his words, when he answered:

"Judas is still with him, and will stay with him, until his rise or fall." Immediately Callidora interrupted him:

"Thou repeatest the words of Simeon, which he spoke to his mother in the Temple. 'Behold, this one is set for the fall, and the rise of many in Israel, and for a sign, which shall be contradicted'; his mother related them to me on the way to Cana. Shall Israel fall or rise with him?"

Rapha had lost his bearings; he entered upon the subject which he had ever avoided, and proceeded:

"I heard him deliver a long discourse to the people on the hillside to the north in view of the Lake. It was this season of the last year. His words have impressed me to the present hour, although he taught nothing new. It was his authority that held us all at his feet for three long hours. He taught of his own; he did not then borrow from the Law and the Prophets, and he did not appeal to 'His Father' in heaven; nay, he directed us to the Lord of hosts as OUR Father!"

Callidora asked eagerly:

"Canst thou repeat some of his words? Repeat his very own words, I mean; not, put his spirit in thy words?"

And Rapha replied:

"I have so often repeated the opening words of his sermon, that I know them by heart."

"Oh, tell me, Rapha!" she exclaimed, stretching forth her hands so as almost to touch his; and he did not withdraw his own, but gazing lovingly into her sparkling eyes, continued:

"I told thee before, that he did not teach new doctrines, but I must limit this a little, that he did not preach new things for me, but things too high and noble for man to emulate. And hence I have considered him a visionary, who is running to his death with dreamy eyes. Listen now, and thou mayest judge for thyself: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.' But the Lord hath blest us and our fathers with the abundance of the fields and the flocks as a reward for our fidelity."

Callidora knitted her brows: "Did he say all this?"

"Nay, nay," Rapha hastened to reply; "only this: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven'; the rest is my doubt concerning his words."

"I beg of thee, good Rapha," she pleaded, "to do as thou hast promised; give me his words alone."

"We will examine them afterwards," he said with a kindly smile that was meant to be an acknowledgment of her correction. "'Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land!' But—" She raised her finger in warning, and he resumed: "'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' This is a beautiful saying." He said this so quickly, that her warning could not stop him. But she had now become used to the form of the Prophet's instruction, and could distinguish Rapha's

remarks from the tenor of the sermon. Still she gave him a look of censure.

“Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.” Now Callidora interrupted him:

“Repeat it, pray, repeat it, Rapha; it is so beautiful.”

Rapha playfully raised his finger in imitation of her own warnings, and repeated the sentence. The next sentence was lost upon her. She sat thoughtful and still, and did not even notice that Rapha did not proceed beyond the last sentence. Rapha watched her closely. In her fine, sensitive mien played the quick changes of a new morn at the kindling of dawn: first, a misty veil seemed to flutter over it, and to ripple down in lucid waves, and straightening, spread calm and peace over the troubled lines. Then the veil was lifted, and revealed the glistening tear-drops trembling on the dark lashes; and in the twinkling of an eye the glad-some sunshine of happiness lit up the transfigured countenance, still adorned with the jewels of her tears.

“Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God,” she murmured to herself, evidently oblivious of the presence of her lover. Then a spell of meditative silence, and again the soft murmur on her lips: “for they shall see God!” Her soul could not contain its happiness and admiration.

Rapha felt that these were sacred moments; and even he could not wholly withdraw himself from the inspiration of peace, such as he had never experienced before. It was a nobler love than that of form and feature that was quietly taking possession of his heart. Much as he was drawn to cast himself at her feet, and, setting aside all conventionalities, to carry her off bodily to the cottage by the Migdol, he dreaded to intrude his desires upon the sanctity of this precious hour. He who had, after the fashion of his people, never manifested respect to a woman, beyond the scant measure of public propriety, was awed into reverence of

this mite, sick though she was, and a stranger to his people and his religion!

With a start of joyful awakening she came to herself, and said ecstatically:

“Rapha, how great must be the bliss of heart of him who shall see God! How sweet the cleanliness, that will reflect the image of the Almighty! Hath man ever seen God?”

Rapha knew from the Holy Books that God had appeared to Abraham; but also, that Moses, who asked to see the face of the Most High, was rebuked for his audacity; so he merely said:

“God is a spirit, and cannot be seen here below.”

“But have ye not the promise that ye shall see the face of God?”

Rapha answered rather diffidently:

“But as for me, I will appear before thy sight in justice: I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear;¹ they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the beauty of our God,² and the glory of God is risen over thee.”³

Callidora knew that he was quoting the Holy Writings of his people, and asked boldly:

“Do your Holy Books say this of the Messiah?”

And Rapha responded readily:

“I will not give my glory to another, or my praise to graven things.”⁴ — If Jesus of Nazareth be the Messiah, where is his glory, the glory of God?”

“But,” continued Callidora in the same tone of boldness, “is not his sanctity the glory of God? Is he not as pure as the first rose upon these hills, as peaceful as the turtle-dove, as chaste as the mountain spring, as humble as — himself, as meek as a lamb, as upright as a child?”

“And as fiery as the south wind,” supplemented Rapha;

¹ Ps. 16, 15 (17, 15).

² Isaiah, 35, 2.

³ Isaiah, 60, 1.

⁴ Isaiah, 42, 8.

"thou shouldst have seen him in the Temple, when he drove out the haggling merchants!"

"His grave shall be in glory," the maiden ventured anew. "The Messiah must establish the reign of God, and will probably perish in the attempt. But can the designs of the Lord be frustrated? What if he be a second Moses to deliver you from bondage, and himself shall not taste the fruits of his labors? 'Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God,'" she sighed; "I shall love him the better for this beautiful revelation."

Rapha had entered upon the subject unawares, and now felt annoyed at having made any concessions to the claims of the Prophet. He rose abruptly, and silently led the way back towards the tower. The maiden did not like this curtness, and bade him a very cool "Peace over thy couch!" through the low tone of which, however, he perceived the note of sadness. But he was exasperated at his unwariness; a pious Jew, to provoke such unwarranted enthusiasm over him who has declined to rescue her from her terrible misfortune!

Callidora prayed all that night for the inestimable gift of cleanliness of heart, that she also might "see God." The Prophet of Nazareth had assumed a new role in her eyes: He was the incarnate God of hosts, come from heaven for the regeneration of the human heart. His words kindled her soul; and her soul was gaining health and strength. What cared she, if he did not deign to cleanse her flesh, if only he would teach her to be "clean of heart," for she would some day "see God."

CHAPTER IX

THE WHITE BARBARIAN

THE effect of Ben Hadassah's agitation among the inhabitants of the region between Hippos and Chorazin, on the eastern shore of the Sea of Gennesar, soon became very apparent. He had come up from Jericho with the avowed purpose of inciting the north to rebellion, if necessary, against the Roman tribunes and governors; or, of rousing the ambition of the proud Galileans to prepare for the advent of the Messiah in their midst: "for the time is now at hand for his coming," he would begin and conclude his spirited harangues. The eastern shore was readier soil than any other region of the country; it was drenched with the spirit of liberalism imported from Rome and Grecian Alexandria, and although the expectancy of those Jews was not focused on the Messiah as the coming God-King, yet they would take fire at the announcement of the national Savior's appearance or advent.

Councils were gathering in all the towns and villages; secret communication was established between the several cities, leaders were appointed; but the constitutional Jewish leaders of the communities were ignored. They could indeed not help seeing the transformation going on; but they could not place their finger on any definite person, place, or event, to arrest the movement and draw information. The men initiated were in earnest.

During these three or four weeks of secret work, Ben Hadassah did not think of the Prophet of Nazareth. He was so absorbed in his plans and schemes that he himself

at last became the central figure in his own mind, and, as Herod the Great had done before him, began to compare the ancient prophecies with the events of his own life, in order to justify his extraordinary claims.

It is a peculiar phenomenon of human history, that classic lines fit any object or person a little removed from the ordinary, for the human mind runs in the channels of the sublime as soon as it comprehends an object lying beyond its customary compass. Thus the religious traditions of the oldest nations of the earth embody the fundamental plan of the restoration of the human race to grace; in outline, it is true: but so well defined, that a comparison of their adaptation and arrangement with the actual accomplishment reveals a surprising similarity, manifesting more clearly than any other fact in history the sovereign influence of the ancient revelations on the one side, and on the other, the ready union of the mind of man with the dispositions of God for the spiritual life of the race: the mythologies of the ancients were true, although dust-darkened, mirrors of the gospel of Paradise.

Ben Hadassah conceived great reverence for himself, as he contemplated his imputed mission, and waxed strong and courageous in proportion to his success, which was great beyond his own expectations. The entire region was astir with the excitement of the hour. But his exalted ambitions were too tender to be put before the public; he waited patiently for the day when his adherents and admirers should lift him on their shoulders and proclaim him the "King of the Jews." They were slow to see the light, he thought; but the glory would be the greater at the full awakening of the masses.

Meanwhile Miriam also had come home to Magdalum of Gennesar, on the western coast of the Lake. Her "reawakening from the dead," as she called her recovery from the terrors of that dungeon, had been wrought under such

circumstances as would, at the moment, mystify the most sober minded. Whatever finger might have beckoned her back from the portals of eternity, she could not remember. But she had a vivid recollection of the scene that met her stupefied gaze at the instant of her resuscitation: she was surrounded by a circle of strange figures, clad in the garments of mourning, each bearing a torch, and all droning a doleful dirge. In their midst stood a figure in white garments, with white hair and long white beard, who seemed to lead the solemn chant. She groped about herself, and found, upon following the empty grasp of her right hand, that she was bedded at the side of an open grave. At her left she saw the corpse of Hannah prepared for burial. She raised herself — and the solemn murmur dropped away, the voices thinning out one by one, like the hum of a procession entering a walled city, until dead silence reigned: a funeral lament over her warming body!

Now she remembered Shemaiah, the venerable old chanter of her death-psalm, the friend of Ben Hadassah; and the memory gave her new assurance of life. At first she had thought that she was about to be presented for judgment before the ancients departed, and dreaded the inevitable sentence of reprobation. "How clearly the mind thinks, when the sentiment of the heart inspires or corroborates the thought!" she said to herself at the first dawning of consciousness to her surroundings. She had never before, not even in the fear of the night after Herod's banquet, so distinctly understood that she had committed an irreparable offense against the Judge of the heart and reins of man. She recoiled from the burden of atoning for it, and cried out: "Let me live, let me live! I detest this darkness and oblivion!" And she arose from the board on which she had been bedded, and shed from her limbs the shroud with which she had been wound.

Standing among these ghastly figures, and at the mouth

of her grave, with the ashen but peaceful face of her erstwhile maid lit up by the lantern of the grave-digger at her feet, she trembled and feared, almost to dying anew. Shemaiah, the Badger of these caves, apprehended her terror, and took her by the hand to lead her aside. She followed a few steps; but when she saw that some of the mourners made ready to lower the body of Hannah into the ditch, she wrenched her hand from his grasp, and returning stopped them: "Do not bury her here, I pray you; bed her in the sunlight, where the flowers bloom and the bul-bul sings, where every new morning prophesies the day of resurrection."

They respected her wish, and taking up the body of the dead maiden with reverence, bore it away up to the crest of a hill, where they buried it amid the wild flowers. But Miriam had hardly breathed the air of day when she again swooned away. They harbored her in the tower at the entrance until she was so far recovered that she could be sent away to Jericho; then they seated her on her own mount, and sent a young man with her as an escort through the intricate paths of the wooded hills and ravines. At the border of the woods he deserted her, and once more she was free — but her soul was laid in closer fetters than ever. She had tasted death, and looked into the jaws of her own grave, and looked beyond the narrow gulf that flows between time and eternity, and had shuddered at the new aspect that life had taken in the shadow of death; she had come to her senses.

It was Shemaiah's custom to examine every door and cavern once a week. Ben Hadassah had departed with the women. The way which he had chosen was the usual road to liberty: for the outer gate led to a goat-path, which no one would find again in this wilderness of stone, but which connected in a straight line with the road of Jericho. Three days after his unceremonious departure, when the men had returned to their posts, and only a handful of guards re-

mained, Shemaiah had opened the "Cavern of Liberation," and, to his extreme amazement, found the bodies of the two women. After a hurried examination, he sounded the signal for the twenty-four interior guards, that these unfortunates might have the customary honors of the Jewish burial rites, during which Miriam regained life and speech.

This ordeal had chastened her more than she knew in the beginning. On her arrival in Jericho her first thought was of alarming the authorities and setting them on the tracks of her captors; but she realized instantly that it was but the foolish prompting of revenge. Herod had repeatedly tried to dislodge the "patriots" of Galilee from their mountain retreats, and failed. Pilate had sent his bailiffs into the hills of the Jericho road, and failed. Driven from Galilee, they would flee into Judea; cast out of Judea they concealed themselves in the bowels of the earth, like the bears in winter. It was useless to complain about them to a Jew; he might be a confederate; and dangerous to denounce them to the Romans, who could not repair the injury inflicted by them. And besides, Miriam had learned the lesson of death, such a wholesome lesson that she was too grateful toward God, despite her fears of His wrath, to hound down the men who had involuntarily contributed so much toward her complete mental reawakening.

After this terrible experience she had returned to her mansion and gardens in Gennesar. Her servants, who had also been afraid to arouse the authorities, for the same human reasons that prevailed against her own indeliberate judgment, had preceded her. But as soon as she arrived at home, she discharged everyone of her retinue during her vacation: "The fate of your mistress," she said, "should have been your first and only consideration; I might have perished, but for sheer luck." She paid them well, and dismissed them.

The first two weeks after her return she spent in the

gardens in complete separation from everyone, except a comely young maid, who had come through Magdalum, and had been engaged by Rapha to fill the place of the much lamented Hannah. Her name was Rhode, "the Rose," a Greek name; but she deserved it well. She was fair as the dawn, light of complexion and hair, with blue eyes, a straight nose, and lips as red as berries. Her hair streamed down her back in flaxen waves, and with the profusion of a sheaf of wheat. She dressed in white linen, hemmed with blue, and wore a blue ribbon in her hair, encircling her head. She was of barbaric origin; — but the maidens of Gennesar had learnt the full story of the "Harlot" and would not take service with her more. When Rapha examined her, she told him blandly that she was born of a Teuton captive and a Roman maid in Rome, and that she was brought to Cæsarea by her mother, who wished to join Godoar, her father, the doughty Rhætian¹ chieftain; but when she found that he had entered into new marital relations, and her mother followed his example, she absconded and journeyed northward to the "Prince's Garden," which she considered a very Walhalla² of the gods. Rapha was shocked at such lack of religious faith and sentiment; but he had been sent out to engage the first comely damsels he would meet; and he had seen many devout maids who had turned up their eyes at the name of Miriam, and many who would gladly come, but who were not comely: Rhode had been found suitable and willing.

Her Greek name was given to her by the soldiers among whom she had lived, and begun to bloom. Her father had originally called her "Ruota," his "Rod," and her mother, "Balbina," but had ever omitted the "B" when she was alone with her.³ But she herself thought that Rhode was as good a name as she cared to bear. There were no roses

¹ Rhætium, Bavaria, a Roman military conquest.

² The Olympus of German Mythology.

³ "Albina," the little white one.

in the Teuton forests, her father had often told her, except the roses of the sloe; but they were very fragrant and beautiful when they appeared in clusters; "but," she had chattered, "father said, that one of them was as pretty to him as a hundred in a bunch, if they came in my species. I do not know what he meant; but he said it only when I made trouble for him, put on his helmet, or wore his sword, or went sailing with his cloak and buckler, and drowned and was lost and killed a hundred times. One day I went out to drill with the company, wearing father's old *caligae*,¹ and using mother's ladle for a sword, and an old lid for a buckler; but from that day, Sire," she said with a roguish wink, "I have quit the military: father's compliments on my prowess came too thick and fast."

Rapha was scared at so much wickedness, but it was evening and his mistress's orders had to be obeyed. He had still imagined that he was executing the command of the imperious young woman for whose whim he had once braved the perils of the stormy lake.

Rhode was a very interesting companion to Miriam. The twain would stroll about the gardens, and the flower-decked banks of the Lake for hours together, the half-wild "Rose from the icy regions" pouring out her perfume in the form of wit, curiosity, astonishment, or childish fretting, as her fickle moods suggested, with an incessant stream of her fresh, melodious voice. She had, to all intents, never heard the word self-control or self-discipline; yet her forwardness was no more offensive than the chirping of the sparrows, or the antics of a puppy, and amid her uncontrollable gush of light-heartedness there never sounded a word, there never appeared the taint of a thought, of frivolity. It was this ingenuousness that mystified Miriam. The child must have seen and heard things in the camps of the soldiers, and in the streets of voluptuous Rome, that should

¹ Soldiers' boots.

have wiped the bloom of innocence from her soul. Now she was sixteen years old, and still a child in purity.

But Miriam recalled her own girlhood, spotless and sweet, and in its cherished beauty as much proof against the withering breath of sin as pure gold is proof against debasement by breath. Had she not courted sin, she would not now repent. Sin had approached her at her own invitation. She had broken down the hedge about her garden of innocence, and beckoned to the beasts to come and destroy the garden. This child was every man's daughter, and every child's sister, and ever chirped with the birds in the trees, crowded with the cocks, cackled with the hens, conversed with the flowers, and romped with the shaggy curs in the streets. And she was attentive withal. She seemed to have a surplus of cheerfulness that must out at all hazards, or choke in her breast. She was not vain, nor very modest, Miriam thought, despite her innocence. The strict rules of deportment laid down by law and custom for the guidance of the Jewish maidens, and made irksome by being enforced with the lordly rigor of the covetous men, held neither charm nor check for her. On their wanderings along the beach she could not be persuaded to keep her shoes on her feet, or her veil over her brow; and at home, when she was alone with her disquieted mistress, she would often seek comfort at the cost of seemliness, lounging on the couches and divans, playing the harp, and reciting Greek rhapsodies, attired after the fashion of the Imperial tragedians. To corrections of such unseemly conduct she would listen with large-eyed, open-mouthed wonder; "they do it in Rome," she would say; "is that wrong in Gennesar which is right in Rome?" Still Miriam continued her warnings and succeeded only in eliciting from her the dry remark: "Ye Jews must be very sore people not to bear, without a twitch in the stomach, the sight of a maiden, unless she be wrapped in a rug or a sheet." After this tilt, Miriam desisted from her

admonitions; she thought that she was hardly a fit teacher of propriety at all events, and the unconscious pertness of this child might some day stumble over her unpleasant past and unearth the skeletons that she wished to remain buried forever.

But it was inconceivable that this maiden should have passed through fire without even carrying away the smell of the burning in her garments. Miriam had persistently suppressed the suspicion of hypocrisy; because the child was too young to be such a consummate hypocrite, as she must be, to play the part of the angel with the devil in her breast. And she was certainly not weak-minded!

One morning, as they were passing through the great gate, on the way to the beach, they met two merchants, who had come over from Chorazin. Miriam knew them, but did not think that she was recognized. The men were talking with great animation; but little could be understood, because of their generally talking together, and gesticulating before each other's face. When they had gone by, Miriam heard the name of Ben Hadassah. Its sound from the mouth of these men of the North arrested her attention and appalled her. She stood still for a moment to hear more. Rhode noticed the embarrassment and terror in the face of her mistress. "Ben Hadassah?" she said, looking straight into Miriam's eyes; "I know him; I traveled in his company two days and a night, until we parted at Tarichææ. Thou also seemest to know him, Mistress mine."

She generally addressed Miriam in her own jovial way as "my *Lord Mira*,"¹ excusing her irreverence with the pretense that, according to her father's teaching, no woman among the Teutons has a right to have a servant, as there are only self-sold slaves, but no servants in their forest homes. "*Mira*" she preferred for brevity; for "she needed so much breath for the rest she had to say, and the Latin '*Mira*' was so fit and beautiful a name for a woman of such great

¹ Wonderful.

beauty and so many accomplishments." Now and then she would condescend to employ the Hebrew name, especially when she was surprised by a serious thought.

While Miriam hesitated a little, not knowing whether to answer at all, or with an evasion, or to tell the truth to this talking Sphynx, the two travelers stopped in their tracks, and broke forth in a shout of derision. She looked up, and saw one pointing a finger at her, exclaiming: "Vah, the Harlot of Gan-Sar in sack-cloth!"

Miriam had discarded her finery, jewels, and daintiness, and was clad in the simple garb of the Jewish women of means, yet with elegant simplicity, as became a woman of education and refinement. Hence the brutality of the jibe at her simplicity.

Rhode's brow darkened. After a deep stare into the tear-brimmed eyes of her mistress, the lashes dropped over her eyes like a veil of mist over a limpid spring. She had discovered the evil secret of her mistress's life, and from that hour her conduct toward her was changed.

Miriam did not dare again to look into the child's face, and was so embarrassed, and so deeply stung by her shame, that she stood helpless, not knowing whither to turn to hide her face. Rhode, however, was equal to the exigencies of the moment. Putting an arm around Miriam's neck, she raised herself on tip-toe, and drew the sorrowing face so far that she could kiss away the hot tears from the burning cheeks. Then she said in a voice strangely sweet with affection:

"Do not weep, my good mistress. It makes me sad to see thee sorrowing. Raise thy head; the good God who maketh His sun to shine over thee hath greater mercy than thy cruel brethren."

But Miriam did not respond to these effusive caresses. She was too deeply wounded to seek comfort. She gently loosened Rhode's arm, and walked away, entering the gar-

dens, and foregoing the pleasure of roving along the blooming shore. Rhode followed her, silent, but with head erect, and eyes wide open with sorrow and sympathy. Miriam moved on, slowly, like one way-worn and exhausted, until she reached the bower far in the thicket of the orchard, where she entered and flung herself on her knees, burying her face in her hands, bowed in despair as the criminal under the ax of the executioner. Her tears streamed through her fingers, and her impetuous sobbing shook her prostrate frame. Rhode stood by, sadly watching this paroxysm of pain and grief.

When the sobbing ceased, and the storm had abated, the tears were still trickling down the face now pallid with regret and remorse, like the golden rain filtering through the sunlight after a dark shower. The heavily laden heart was unburthened, the hands dropped into her lap, and the injured woman sat back on her heels, still unable, it would seem, to conquer her shame and raise her eyes to the faces of men.

Rhode's time was now come. She approached Miriam softly from the rear, and notwithstanding the cold welcome of her caress of a half-hour before, she knelt down in the white sand beside her mistress, flung both arms about her neck, and kissed her tenderly. Miriam had not thought of her, and was startled, but submitted to this manifestation of love with the utmost happiness. "A friend in need is a friend indeed"; and what greater need than the scorn and contempt of those who first had bowed to her, and now upbraided her with a lapse that her abandon had made too plausible to gainsay; and what better friend than a heart that has room for compassion, for love, for respect, for affection, in view of such dark shadows of disgrace!

Miriam returned the caresses of her mysterious friend tenfold, but without ostentation; every kiss was a seal of love, every caress a communication of warm affection. At

last she took the hands of Rhode and enclosing them in her own folded hands, raised them towards heaven, and humbly prayed: "Out of the depths have I cried to Thee, O Lord, Lord hear my prayer"; and, to her surprise, the maid responded: "If thou wilt mark the misdeeds, Lord, Lord, who shall stand it?"

And Miriam gathered up the verse that Rhode had omitted:

"Let Thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication."

The next verse Rhode recited into the ear of her mistress:

"For with Thee there is merciful forgiveness: and by reason of Thy law, I have waited for Thee, O Lord."¹

When they had finished their prayer, they sat down together, side by side, Miriam holding Rhode's hand in her own, and caressing it repeatedly, although, perhaps, unconsciously.

"Where didst thou learn the prayer of the Jews?" she opened the conversation; "thou hast not been long with us!"

"The prayers of the Jews do not differ much from the prayers of good people in other parts of the earth," Rhode replied; "prayer is only a heart-cry to heaven, and the hearts of men are the same in all breasts, and heaven is no farther from Rome than from Jerusalem. I know another prayer, which thou hast never heard."

She had again found her tongue.

"Let me hear it then, Rhode."

"It is the prayer of Jesus of Nazareth."

"Hast thou seen him also, and spoken to him?"

"I met him in Samaria, where I tarried two months at Sichar. The city resounds with the praise of his goodness and his doctrine. But before I met him face to face, I had sat at the feet of James and John, two of his disciples, whom he sends out to preach. John, a very comely young man,

¹ Ps. 129.

one evening gathered the children of a village — Bethania, I ween, near Jerusalem — around himself, and taught them the new prayer. I sat in the midst of the young Jews and Jewesses, and heard every word, and, I think, remembered his instructions better than the others; for when he questioned us concerning what he had taught, I could answer him to every question. For this he also singled me out to be baptized, and took me to the house of a Jew, Nicodemus by name, whose wife and daughters instructed me further in the doctrine of the Great Prophet; and when I left their house, they filled my wallet with bread and fruit, and gave me a handful of pennies, and admonished me to remember the good Man of Nazareth in all my ways. And I do think of him from morning to night."

"But what is the prayer?"

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' I do not recite more of it, because the rest is a little selfish, begging for the daily bread, which I have ever had in abundance; and asking forgiveness for debts — sins, mayhap, — which I have not. I have never wronged anyone in my life. The last petition, 'and lead us not into temptation,' I do repeat, when I travel on lonely roads; and the very last one, I do not quite understand: 'But deliver us from evil'; it did not help me when a man snatched my last penny from my hand, although I shouted it into his face. So I stopped that entirely. But I am proud that I may call God my father, and bless His name, and do His will even as the angels in heaven; and if His Kingdom does not come over me, I shall climb into it by stealth or force. I remember hearing Jesus of Nazareth say; 'The Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away!'"

At these words she leaned towards Miriam, with the suspicion of a roguish smile on her lips. But her mistress was too sore at heart to apprehend the premonition of danger,

signaled by that smile, and the attitude of watchfulness, and inquired:

“Who are they that bear it away?”

“The Pharisees and Scribes; the Great Prophet denounced them publicly, saying: ‘Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven before men; but the harlots shall enter therein before you.’”¹

Miriam was trapped.

She winced. That terrible name, which had been branded on her brow in the streets of the City! Had Rhode purposely employed it to disconcert her, or to force from her a confession of her guilt?

Now she searched those deep, blue eyes more closely; but they reflected naught but an honest curiosity, without the reserve of evil cunning. If the maiden had any misgivings that her mistress deserved that vilification at the hands of her rude countrymen, they were suggested to her as much by sympathy and compassion as by the anxiety of being freed from an unwelcome suspicion.

Miriam would not enlighten her: “A disgrace worth a protest wears the face of guilt,” she thought; she would put the honesty of Rhode to a crucial test.

“Hath he assured the harlots a part in his Kingdom?” she inquired of Rhode without faltering; and the strange child replied with equal freedom:

“Not because he hath called thee to follow him —”

Miriam interrupted her: “He hath not!”

“Ay,” Rhode rejoined blandly; “‘go to the Princess of Magedan,’ he advised me, when I was deliberating whether I should return and seek my mother after my baptism; and a young man, Eleazar,² a rabbi, who was standing by, encouraged me, saying: ‘She is more pagan than Jewish, but hath a kind heart.’ Thereupon the Prophet said: ‘Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.’”

¹ Matt. 21, 31.

² Lazarus, Miriam’s brother.

At the mention of her good brother's name, and the protestation of his confidence in the kindness of her heart, Miriam nearly burst into tears. But she would constrain Rhode to pronounce her own estimate of her without circumlocution.

"Why hast thou come to me," she continued, "if thou considerest me in need of the Prophet's mercy? if I deserve the portion of a wanton?"

"The Prophet's mercy is not for the wanton, but for the penitent; and the curse of a wanton has not been apportioned to thee: thou wert in the Temple at the feast of the Tabernacles, and the Pharisees did not stone thee."

"Haply they feared my influence and power?"

"Nay, nay; they do not even fear God — or little more than thou fearest him thyself. The Prophet wills thee to follow him; but thou must be purified by penance and baptism, as I was purified. His love shall open a heaven in thy soul!"

Was then the God of her fathers more merciful than the expounders of His law? And was the Prophet of Nazareth the messenger of heaven's mercy and forgiveness, even to her, the profligate, the renegade, the "Sinner"? True, the land was ringing with his name; but no longer, as in the beginning of his appearance, with unmixed praise and admiration; there were heard voices of abuse and execration, which, if less numerous, were more vehement and much louder. Was he still patiently waiting for her to cast herself at his feet, and be forgiven?

The thought of meeting him face to face had lost its terror. If his disciple disdained not to impart the doctrine of Salvation to a flaxen-haired wild maid, merely because she was willing to learn, would the Master spurn the petition of a penitent woman, a daughter of Judah? But could he restore her honor? Nay; there was no redemption for woman in Israel. The priests and elders would not accept her

reconciliation by his or any other man's hand. If they would acknowledge his claim of "being sent of the Father" to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel, then they would have to readmit her by God's own authority to their communion, as the high priest of old accepted the bold prayer of the mother of Samuel. But unless he proved that he was the Messenger of the Covenant, she could only persevere in her penance, and trust in the mercy of the Father, who had also forgiven the crimes of David. Like a flash the memory of the adulterous woman, brought before him in the Temple for judgment, came back to her mind. The leaders allowed him to acquit her — hence they recognized his extraordinary mission, at least before the people. Oh, she would improve the next occasion to obtain an interview with him, and confess her whole guilt!

"What dost thou think of the Prophet? who is he?" she continued her questioning after this pause, during which Rhode had intently watched the changing expression of her countenance.

"He is, without doubt, the Son of God!" Rhode exclaimed in surprise. "Father often related to me the story of his gods, of Baldur the White, and of Loghi the Dark; how fair Baldur was killed by the dark Loghi. Since I have set eyes on this most beautiful of men, I have often thought that he is Baldur, the Fair, and will be killed, only to rise again to greater power and glory. The idea of atonement was not new to me, when I heard James cry in the streets of your Jewish villages: 'Repent, lest ye all perish together!' The sacrifices of the Teutons are an acknowledgment of their dependence on their gods. Father never went to battle without first killing a cock in honor of Thor, his god of war, and drinking the health of his supernal champion in the blood of the pugnacious bird. It was a crude expression of his adoration, but it was a prayer; an act of self-abasement before the powers that he held to be the

arbiters of his fortune. It is strange that all Judea and Galilee, all Samaria and the Decapolis, and Tyre and Sidon, are not even now lying prostrate at the feet of the Great Prophet. Your books teem with the descriptions of his advent, his life, his teaching, his death, his resurrection and ultimate triumph, as I have read in your Translation of the Seventy;¹ and he himself has repeatedly, and in my hearing, bidden his adversaries ‘search the Scriptures, for they give testimony of me.’ How can ye hesitate, doubt, dally, tarry, and waste the precious days of his stay in your midst in idle consideration of your imaginary worth before God? Verily ‘the people of the North and the South shall come and sit down to feast with your fathers in the Kingdom of God, and ye, the children, shall be cast out!’”

Rhode had become so enthusiastic that she sprang to her feet and gesticulated most vehemently in the face of Miriam. But Miriam was absorbed in the depth of the teaching propounded by this energetic preacher, and admired her exaltation so profoundly that she still sat in silence when Rhode had finished and stood waiting for a reply. When she became aware of the situation, however, she drew the maiden to her bosom, and said:

“Rhode, thou shalt show me the Master. I will go to him, and ask forgiveness. Wilt thou lead me to him as soon as he returneth to Galilee?”

“He is here even now,” Rhode answered; “on the eastern coast; he preceded Ben Hadassah only by a day’s journey. He had stopped at Bethania for rest and comfort, at the house of Eleazar, after he had left the city and its persecutions. He tarried there three days. Ben Hadassah acquainted me with his movements, and I know that in a week he will again be at Capernaum, where we shall meet him.”

After a momentary conflict between her reluctance and desire of baring her ugly wounds to the physician who alone

¹ The Septuagint.

could heal them, Miriam kissed the fair head of her strange young friend and said:

"I will go, Albina; may he be as gracious to me as he was to the adulteress in the Temple."

"I have heard of her," Rhode replied; "she is now going about distributing her substance to the poor, and praising the mercy of God."

When they returned to the house, Miriam asked abruptly: "Did Ben Hadassah speak to thee of Miriam of Magdala?"

And Rhode replied openly:

"In the long and varied conferences which we held together, he spoke of thee: 'Miriam, the most beautiful and the most wily woman in Galilee, hath perished in the mountains of Jericho.' But I heard the untruth out of his effort to impress me with this news, so that I might spread it. Ben Hadassah is insane."

"Would to God, he were!" Miriam ejaculated angrily; "then someone would club him to death like a mad dog. But he is not insane, Rhode mine; he is a murderer and thief: may the earth swallow him up alive!"

Rhode laid her hand upon Miriam's lips: "'Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven,' the Master saith; 'do not fear those who can only destroy the body, but rather Him who can bring body and soul together into hell.'"

Before they had come out of the olive groves they met Omer, the Silent, carrying a crock and a small basket in his hands. He was so frightened at sight of the women that he stood stock still, and was struck dumb. He had thought they were far out on the beach, and now he meets them in these haunts of his leprous charge! He looked so foolish and stupid that Rhode laughed outright, and the corners of Miriam's mouth twitched, and her eyes lit up. If he, the sober and solemn Omer, had been caught giggling over a basketful of puppies, he could not have been more embarrassed. It was not his wont to become nervous and fidgety,

and it was plainly apparent from his utter bewilderment, which was not dispelled by the merry laugh of the fair barbarian, that he was not troubling himself over his own interests. He had betrayed his trust; Callidora was now again doomed to exile! The dark shadows of despair flitted across his face.

Miriam waited a little for an explanation, and would probably have passed on, thinking that he was carrying refreshments to some beggar, to which she had never objected, had he had the presence of mind to make light of the incident. But his dumb fright marked him as an evil-doer. He seemed to have been turned into stone. Only now and then he would give a sign of life by an occasional gulp; like a toad silently and immovably blinking at the light, and contracting its baggy throat at long intervals.

At last the mistress asked him: "Omer, whither goest thou?"

One more gulp, and he answered gravely: "Nowhere now; I shall return."

"But thou shalt not return, before thou have fed the hungry wayfarer."

"No wayfarer to feed," he answered sullenly.

Rhode had approached him, and was now taking the vessels from his willing hands.

"Come, Omer, she said, "show us the way; we wish to share thy work of mercy."

There was surely some secret about this errand, which Miriam desired the more to learn, the less she had expected to find Omer taken off his guard. Rhode had already turned about in the direction of the vineyards, whither led the path by which Omer had come upon them.

"Direct me, Omer," she said to him, turning her pretty head, "when I strike a false path," and led the way. Miriam followed at the side of the disconcerted servant. After every few steps he stopped and scratched his head, and looked

dubiously into Miriam's face, as if he wanted to confess some misdeed, but trusted not in her kindness. She stopped with him every time, but never questioned or encouraged him. Amid such antics they reached the highest part of the vineyards, where stood the massive tower, built of stone, and the wine presses, hewn out of the living rock. Round about this nest of rock was a shady grove of walnut, hazel, and palm trees, strangely growing, flowering and bearing fruit together, the nut trees being foreigners in all the land, except on the hills of Gennesar. In the shade of the grove, Rhode, who had hurried ahead as soon as she was certain of the goal of their excursion, saw the white robe of a maiden shimmering through the shrubbery, and approached on tip-toe. The recluse was not aware of her approach, until she stood in front of her, salaaming courteously, and bidding her the "Peace of God."

Callidora thought she was in the presence of a messenger of heaven. She had never seen a child of such fair complexion and hair, such blue eyes, so slender a figure, in such plain attire; and her meditations had these last few weeks elevated her to such exalted regions that at last her dreams became alive with figures such as this, as graceful, as pure, as gentle. She arose in confusion, and bowed to her distinguished visitor, waiting "his" pleasure. But Rhode now raised her voice, as Miriam was coming upon them, and cried joyfully: "A stray dove, *Domine mi Mira!*"¹

This aroused the poor captive. She looked around, and fixing her startled gaze on Miriam, paled to whiteness, and trembled with apprehension. Miriam recognized her former handmaid, and hesitated. Callidora spread out her hands against her, and sighed: "I am an outcast — have mercy!"

At these words, Rhode set down the vessels, and

¹ My Lord Mira.

embraced the trembling suppliant, and kissed her brow. Miriam threw up her hands in horror, and cried out: "Do not touch her, she is a leper!"

"And if she be," she answered, "and if I be contaminated, the Good Shepherd will have two lambs to wash at once"; and she repeated her caress.

Miriam was angry at such disobedience of her servant. She looked around for Omer; but he had disappeared. She repeated her command; but Rhode was obstinate.

In a few moments of thought, during which her anger cooled, Miriam remembered her dream of the great Good Shepherd and resolved to parley with her defiant maid.

"Who is the Good Shepherd," she inquired, keeping her distance, "by whom ye expect to be cleansed?"

Rhode sat down on a grass-grown bank, drew Callidora down at her side, and said:

"Come, good mistress, and sit down with us, and I will tell thee."

But such persistence was exasperating. Still, this strange bit of impudence and innocence had proved herself such a sincere and sympathetic friend that she would not now judge her, before she understood her strange doings; therefore, Miriam approached to within six paces of their place of rest, and said curtly: "Speak!"

Rhode began pathetically:

"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. I know mine, and mine know me, as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father: and I lay down my life for my sheep. And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold' — behold here, my good mistress, two lambs, not of the fold of Israel! — 'them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life' — and now — hear ye of slow understanding! — 'I lay down my life that I may take it

up again' ¹ — Dost thou know the voice? He is the Good Shepherd. He said it in public, in the Temple, at the last feast of the Dedication; and John related it to me."

She had spoken with exuberant pathos, but yet with sincere reverence. The idea seemed too luminous for her mental eye to bear without twinkling; but she gazed at it bravely, and carried away its impression in her mind, and circumscribed it in her own childish manner. It had not failed to impress Miriam; He was not to remain with the dead forever; He was to rise again — but Rhode's deduction was correct: He was to die! It was now plain to her: He is the Emmanuel, the Shepherd, the Father of the World to Come! But if He is the Son of the Living God, will He accept the face of a — harlot? It was the first time that she confessed this galling title to herself; but the confession was forced by the unbeseeming contrast between her sinfulness and the sanctity of God. She had so often been accused by that name, that she became confused at last and lost the distinction between the one sin, that marked the fatal fall of a woman, and the sins of scandal and levity that are so frequently its forerunners and companions.

Miriam stood in silence for a long while, giving her heart time to feel its way through to love, through the mazes of the sentiments of fear and shame, hope and despair. When she spoke again, her manner was changed; she had passed to a new stage of her transformation. But there was a secret mistrust of her perseverance still lurking in her heart; she could not warm up with the confident love of these two maidens, the one a barbarian by descent, and the other no better. She consoled herself with the reflection that they had seen him, and spoken to him; when he would again appear about the Lake, she also would make bold to speak to him. She wondered why she hesitated so long to ask of him what he had repeatedly granted to others, the forgive-

¹ John, 10, 11-17.

ness of their sins, and why she had been so slow to accept him for his proved claim as the Messiah, the Son of God. She had ever been doubting without reason, ever been reluctant against her childhood convictions. In her school days she had been firmly convinced that the Messiah could be no other but God in the flesh.

During this pause of reflection she resolved to perform an act of heroism, than which no nobler had been heard of in Israel; she would take the leper into her mansion, and nurse her with her own hands. Therefore she now approached the unfortunate maiden, and knelt down on the ground before her, saying:

“Callidora,” — she had heard half of her story from Ben Hadassah at Callirrhoe — “forgive me the rudeness with which I cast thee forth! I will take thee into my house —”

“But it is contrary to your laws,” the maid objected.

“These laws have also branded me, and made my return to the company of my people impossible,” Miriam rejoined; “let me live by their laws, but thou shalt not die by them. Show me thy sores!”

Callidora unbound the sore arm; it presented a frightful sight. Then she removed the veil from her breast, and revealed a malignant blotch, a new earnest of her doom. Miriam shuddered. The Teuton maid looked on with much unconcern.

“He cleansed ten on the borders of Samaria, who were half eaten up,” she remarked.

“But he declined to cleanse me,” Callidora replied mournfully.

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!” Rhode said, and drew the veil over the sufferer’s breast.

Miriam was at a loss what to do now. She was afraid that nothing that she could do would agree with the ideas of these peculiar maidens. She would have kissed the

disfigured breast, just to overcome her loathing — but she did not kiss the arm that was still exposed.

She did not understand herself. She wished to do what she thought proper, charitable, heroic; but she sought occasions and circumstances that would flatter her sensibility against her intention. It had ever been thus; she could not divest herself of the Miriam that was wont to deny herself nothing, and to dip deep into every enjoyment presenting itself. She wondered that it was so difficult to lay aside the habit of sin.

Now she arose and asked the maidens to follow her to the house. She led the way, but did not return by the customary path. She crossed the vine-clad hills, and passed through the gate, the keys of which she always carried when at home, and stepped out upon the highway, where she beheld three men coming up from Capernaum, and on the other side a group of five or six coming down from the upper hills, on the road of Naim. Nothing dismayed, she proceeded, with the two maidens following at a distance of ten or twelve paces. As the travelers from the city on the Lake drew nigh, she recognized Simon, the Pharisee, the father of Ben Hadassah, her inveterate enemy. But he might not recognize her in her simple and modest attire. She proceeded, nothing daunted. But when she was about to pass them, Simon raised his right hand in her very face, and shouted: "The Harlot of Gan-Sar!" Miriam was taken off her feet. For an instant she swayed with fury; but the next, she struck him such a smart blow in the face that he stepped aside as from an adder, and put his hand to his cheek. She attacked him again, and struck and clawed him until he fell on his knees. His companions fled.

"Is there such despite in thy heart, son of Beelzebub," she cried out, "that thou shouldst forever lie about my sin? Was thy wife not a woman? Was thy mother not a woman? God has not blessed thy arms with the comfort of a

daughter — go to thy grave without comfort, and may thy place be forgotten in the land!"'

She struck him another blow, and clutched his throat, when her charges and the travelers from Naim came upon the scene.

"Miriam!" — The tone of this voice was authoritative and peremptory; "I command thee to desist!"

She had already desisted; why this useless command? But her bosom was heaving with rage, her temples were throbbing, every vein in her body was strained with passion. She turned like a serpent — and faced Jesus of Nazareth. Simon ran away as fast as his years would permit. Rhode and the leper were at the side of the Prophet, and five men stared at her as at a monster. Rhode was not disturbed; Callidora manifested compassion; and the Prophet stood, looking at her intently, calmly, sovereignly; only the fire of his eyes bespoke his interest in the scene. When she fixed her eyes on him, doubting whether she should curse or bless him, he raised his right hand over against her, and said solemnly, and with supreme authority:

"Go forth from her, ye unclean spirits, and give place to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter!"

At the instant she fell prone on her face; foam dripped from her lips, and moistened the ground; her fingers clawed the dust, and her whole frame creaked with horrible convulsions. All the witnesses of this scene stood aghast, except Rhode and the Prophet. Rhode merely said: "It must be a stubborn devil that tarries at this command"; and Simon, one of the disciples, whispered to her: "There are seven¹ of them, and quite domesticated," to which the mischievous damsel replied: "And all tangled, I ween, and grown together, like the nest of vipers on Medusa's head; but she will be healed, once that she be delivered of them."

"Raise her up," the Prophet commanded the maidens.

¹ Luke, 8, 2.

"I may not touch her, Lord," Callidora pleaded, "for I am unclean. Cleanse me, Jesus, Son of David!"

She knelt down and reverently touched the hem of his garments with her lips. But he, stretching forth his hands over her, as he had done in Jerusalem when she was under the lash of Simon, said kindly:

"I will; be cleansed!"

She raised her sleeve over her left arm, and, in the rapture of her happiness, removed the veil from her breast for an instant, and found that she had been made whole at his word. She bowed her head in adoration into the dust, and kissed his feet. But he bade her rise, and repeated his command:

"Raise her up!" and as they raised her up, he departed with his disciples.



CHAPTER X

A DOWNFALL

BEN HADASSAH'S name was now also frequently heard on the Galilean side of the Lake. The territory of Gaulon and the Decapolis on the eastern shore was thoroughly aroused; men were looking for the King. But two factors, which the agitator could not control, hampered his work: for one, the hopes, which he held out, were indefinite in this respect, that he had everywhere left the impression, faint but unmistakable, of his own ambitious aspirations; and then, that region was so densely peopled with pagans and paganized Jews, that the pious and zealous inhabitants were obliged to dampen their enthusiasm: if the object of their desire did not appear very soon, their fire would burn down again for want of vent. But Ben Hadassah had assured them that the Messiah would make his first appearance in their midst, and would rely upon their faithfulness to carry his name through Galilee into Judea and Jerusalem. He had, therefore, resolved to return to them, and announce himself, after the support of Galilee would be assured.

In Gennesar he met with unexpected success. When they asked him why he bore the surname of a woman, he quoted to them: "The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth: 'A woman shall compass a man,'"¹ and claimed that he came from the wilderness, and that his mother had not seen the face of a man in the desert before his birth. Whether his insane ambition had turned his head, or he was only a

¹ Jerem. 31, 22. Conf. the History of the Rise of Mahomet; of King Agrippa; of the Mahdi (Orwalder; Slatin Pascha).

bold liar, none stopped to explore. His manly beauty, his courtly manner, his supreme self-possession, captivated every heart. Silas, the only man who was acquainted with his past, was nowhere to be seen, and most probably the secret report of his execution for theft in the camp was true; and "Miriam was dead in the Cave of Liberation." He kept the closest watch over the movements of his father, and never appeared before an audience except certain of their ignorance of his person, or with his white, silver-hemmed and embroidered silk head cloth drawn close about his face.

It was in these days that the Prophet of Nazareth returned to Gennesar, preached and wrought signs, moving northward, and crossing over the Lake into the region of Chorazin and Bethsaida, and drawing after himself immense crowds from the towns and villages into the wide, verdant plains strewn like carpets of flowers between the hills in front of the wooded mountain range that loomed up like a dark wall in the eastern and northern horizon. Ben Hadas-sah was chuckling to himself with satisfaction, that even Jesus of Nazareth should contribute to his success.

Great masses of people crossed the lake after the Prophet; even some of his disciples ferried over their friends and acquaintances from Capernaum and the Galilean Bethsaida. Miriam had also come over with her foreign maids, Rapha acting as helmsman, and Omer attending to the sails. In the middle of the lake they met the bark of Simon, the chief Pharisee of Capernaum. Miriam was afraid that he would again insult her, but either he did not recognize her, or haughtily ignored her; he passed without a salute.

But it would have been difficult even for a close friend to recognize in that modest woman the Sinner of Magdalum. Her attire indeed was that of a queen; but her dazzling beauty, that had formerly drawn the eyes of men to her at the instant of her appearance, was no more. In the place of the seductive smiles that were wont to wreath her coral lips

and beam from her eyes, sat sorrow serene. Her face was pale, but clear, with the mellow whiteness of ivory. Her eyes seemed to look inward, and her manner was that of one moving in the presence of a king. She rejoiced in the sunshine and the light morning breeze with the quiet joy of a convalescent from ravaging disease. It was not the sweet joy of her girlhood, she thought; but yet it was pure joy, such as she had not tasted in many years. She did not speak to anyone, except a word now and then to Rhode, the mischief-loving "barbarian," or to Callidora, who was lying against her bosom, as much wrapped in thought as her noble mistress. Miriam had become so generous since meeting the Prophet, that she had enriched her maids with orchards outside of her walled possessions on the banks of the river, and had given to Rapha and to Omer one hundred gold shekels each. The other servants had left her with the exception of those laboring for daily hire in the fields and vineyards. The poor had free access to her kitchen, and the halt and lame were maintained in their homes by her bounty to the treasury of the widows and orphans, established in the synagogue, and in charge of an honest Pharisee.¹ It was her charity that ennobled her in the eyes of the gentle Callidora.

There seemed to be nothing short of death that could dispel the perpetual smile of happiness and harmless roguery from the face of fair Rhode, if indeed death could blot it out. She clung to her mistress with every fiber of her heart, but often disturbed her most solemn and profound musings with an adroit remark or some out-of-the-way undertaking. The evening of that day when they had liberated Callidora from the tower, she knelt with Miriam in prayer, reciting with her the prayer of the Master. After repeating it several times, her mistress knew it by heart; but when she repeated

¹ The sect of the Pharisees embraced the most devout and the most wicked of the Jews.

it alone, and had just concluded: "but deliver us from evil," Rhode added as solemnly as a magpie: "And shut up the pestiferous mouth of Simon."

Miriam began to understand the secret of her purity of heart; the child had seen evil in such hideous shape, probably at so tender an age that temptation could not yet find an ally and traitor within her, that she was frightened at the ugliness of sin; and when she became old enough to experience the aggressions of a rebellious nature, they were discomforts to her, until she learned the sweet doctrine of self-denial and humble victory from the lips of the Great Teacher, and from the gentle John. Possibly even the frigidity and sobriety of her Teutonic strain reduced the perils of her innocence. At all events, it was remarkable that she should have come out of Rome unsullied amid universal carnal corruption, whereas at that time not twelve pure maidens could be found over the age of twelve, to minister in the temple of Vesta. Miriam herself had heard of it out of the mouths of the Roman officials, and had repeatedly seen it in its domesticated form at Cesarea, and at Callirrhoe. She thanked God in her heart that such a flower, wild though it be, should not have lost its beauty in the stagnant pools of sin.

When they landed, they learned that the Prophet had already withdrawn half a day's journey into the flowery plains. The multitude was with him. They hired mules, and followed. Toward noon of the same day they saw the immense crowds in the distance surging around a common center, like the waters of the sea around a rock. There the Prophet must be; but it was impossible to reach him through these masses. They saw him standing on the top of a hill against a dark cluster of olives and sycamores, but could not hear him, except when a current of air would waft the sound of his voice in their direction. But those at the distance were kept in communication with the beloved Teacher

by messages forwarded from mouth to mouth to the very edge of the thickly massed, eager throng. His words took wing from their love of him.

Miriam and her servants squatted in the grass, the women among a group of Bethsaidans (from this side of the Lake) and the men in the company of sturdy fishermen from Capernaum. The men were conversing together in an undertone, and were not very attentive to the messages passing around. In their midst sat one who appeared to be leading their confabulations. His back was turned upon the women, but at a casual glance in his direction Miriam's attention was arrested. She had seen that long white beard, which fluttered in the wind, before this day, and also these broad, massive shoulders, which carried at least some fourscore years, and bore them proudly. Now raising her voice a little above a whisper, she recalled Rhode from a chase with a bevy of romping children, who were scampering about, plucking the leaves of the sorrel to chew for thirst. At that moment the white head turned in surprise towards her, and she recognized her deliverer, the "Patriarch" Shemaiah. He bowed toward her in silent salutation.

What could be the purpose of the "Badger's" presence in the region of Chorazin? She had not yet heard of the secret work of Ben Hadassah. The seclusion of the last two weeks, and the social ban put upon her person, had kept her in ignorance of the movements of the public. And as if Shemaiah knew her to be ignorant of something he wished her to learn, he raised his voice a little, and turned his head aside from his listeners, when he said:

"The signal for the general proclamation is this: When the sun shall be on the point of going down beyond yonder blue range, a man vested in white garments shall ascend the hillock there at the eastern extremity of this plain. As soon as the golden disk shall have descended to the level of his flaming face, he shall unwind the covering of his head, and

fling it upon the wings of the wind. If it fly, he will crown his head with the diadem of royalty, and ye shall proclaim him King of Israel; but if it flutter and fall flat to the ground, ye must bide the manifestation of your Deliverer."

"Shall Ben Hadassah be our King?" one asked coolly.

"Ben Hadassah or some one else whom God may choose," Shemaiah replied, and sank into studied silence.

The Prophet had finished his discourse, and signs of disorder began to appear among the masses. Ever and anon a child would be heard wailing for bread. Mothers would ransack the bags and baskets in which they had brought provisions; but they were empty. It was the third day that they had been with the Great Teacher, and it would be many hours before they could reach the markets of Chorazin, Bethsaida or Thella. The women became anxious, and were seen to rise with troubled faces all over the plain. The cries of the children were multiplied, prolonged, and at last mingled in a woeful concert of wailing and complaining. Miriam distributed every morsel of her own provisions, but there were many more hungry little mouths that could not be filled. Suddenly the cry rang over the thousands of heads: "Sit down, sit down; the Master wills it!" One by one they sat down again, men, women, and children, an innumerable multitude. The hum and murmur was hushed, and an expectant silence prevailed. All eyes were directed toward the mountain where the Prophet had again become visible. They saw him bless a few loaves of bread, and a dish, and immediately break the bread and send his disciples among the crowd. In less than half an hour of excitement and rejoicing the bread and fish had been passed from hand to hand, one learning from the other that he had nothing else to do to fill the hands of his neighbor but to break the bread and the fish, and pass a part to his fellow right or left, without diminishing his own portion. The hunger, the novelty of the feat, and the infectious excitement of so many,

at first hindered their clear understanding of the great deed wrought by the beloved Master; but when their hunger was stilled and the grandeur of his love for the people and their children became clear to them, there arose a shout of praise and thanksgiving over the whole plain: "Hail to the Prophet of the Lord!"

The sun was now setting fast. Many of the groups of men stood breathless, their faces turned towards the East. Others, and the women and children who noticed the strange expectancy in the faces about them, wondered, and for a little while contained the pent-up enthusiasm in their breasts. The disciples of the Prophet quietly moved about gathering up the remnants of the food. Suddenly a man in resplendent white was seen ascending a hillock that lay isolated in the meadows directly in the line of the sun's rays. At its base hovered the dark shadows of the evening, but its top was aglow with the golden and purple rays of the setting sun. "Ben Hadassah, the Liberator!" old Shemaiah cried with an ugly growl of derision. Miriam, who had remained near Shemaiah, noticed that he became uneasy, disappeared behind a mound, and reappeared after a few moments on a sturdy mule, and departed in haste. In the twinkling of an eye, a score more followed him; but their departure was scarcely noticed in the excitement and joy of the multitude.

Now the man on the hilltop appeared in the full glory of the glorious orb; a moment — and his shadow flew out twice his length, his head was enveloped in light, he unwound the covering of his head, and flung it upon the breeze. It fluttered for a moment, but was the next instant caught up and borne aloft and carried away toward the illumined sky. Then a shout as of trumpets rent the air: "Hail to the King!"¹ and instantly all heads were turned — toward Jesus of Nazareth. Ben Hadassah was forsaken and

¹ John, 6, 15.

forgotten; the men pressed forward, repeating the shout of triumph. But when they came to the spot where the Prophet had stood, he had disappeared. They questioned Simon and John concerning him; but they answered disappointedly: "He hath hid himself, and we know not whither he hath gone."

The man on the mound had stood alone for a moment in glory and triumph with a diadem of gold and glittering jewels on his head. Now he lay prostrate on his back, captured and bound by the bailiffs of the tribune of Thella. Miriam knew then why Shemaiah and his band had absconded at the critical moment: they had betrayed him to the Romans; and she sighed.



CHAPTER XI

THE TOUCHSTONE

BEN HADASSAH had undertaken his coup at the most ill-timed moment. He had indeed seen the enthusiasm of the masses over Jesus of Nazareth; but in his inexperience he did not doubt that he could direct it at pleasure, and forgot that he had schooled his adherents only to a definite purpose, and not to a definite, tangible object. The impetuosity of his youth, his unbridled lust of power, his lack of moral balance due to the neglect of self-discipline, had betrayed him into this monstrous mistake. Now they hurried him away from the scenes of his anticipated triumph to the court of the governor of Judea at Cesarea, to be judged and crucified within two months, unless Tiberius, the Slow, would delay the execution by his customary hesitation of signing a death warrant. And it was probable enough that Annas and Caiphas, who had often used him for their tool, would appeal to Cæsar in his behalf over the head of the hated procurator Pilate. But in this case he would be imprisoned in the fortress Antonia in Jerusalem, to be raised up on some feast-day as an example of Roman justice toward usurpers, as Tiberius never condoned the crime of high treason.¹

He was on the way southward the next day, when many of the hearers of the Prophet had come from the plains of Chorazin to Capernaum in quest of new signs and wonders. The beautiful words were cast to the winds; only the memory of the wonderful multiplication of the bread remained. As Ben Hadassah's desperate venture had failed by his own

¹ Jewish Antiq., Case of Agrippa.

imprudence and intemperate audacity, so also the intention of the Great Prophet had not been realized through the narrow-minded prejudice and the unfastidious avidity of the masses. The former would at all hazards be made King; the latter had labored to remove the bandage from the eyes of his followers, and lead them to understand his mission as that of the Messiah, the Son of God. Both had failed; but the Prophet, only temporarily, Ben Hadassah, forever. The one had sought glory at the hands of men; the other had announced Salvation at the hands of God: the one was defeated and rejected; the other was only misunderstood; he had declined the honor of being their King, because his Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, was to come to them by him, not to him by them. They must first become fit subjects ere he would accept tribute from them: he was come in quest of their minds and hearts, and they offered him a throne that was not even in their gift, but in the gift of their conquerors, the pagan Romans!

Miriam had accepted the wonderful multiplication of bread as a matter of course. There was nothing extraordinary that the Prophet could do, which would hereafter appear strange to her; and Rhode and Callidora were delighted at the warm enthusiasm of the people. Rapha did not comprehend it, and Omer did not reveal what he thought. The Tyrean woman who had been engaged to superintend the kitchen, and the two maidens from Thella, her assistants, stood agog at the news in the beginning, but then went about their work with some misgiving concerning the sanity of their “exalted” mistress, and the gullibility of the “Greek maidens.”

The next morning, in the middle of the forenoon, word was brought from Capernaum that the Great Prophet had unexpectedly arrived there with his disciples, although he had not crossed over in their boat. The rumor that he had appeared to them on the troubled waters toward morning,

was not believed. How could a man walk on water, and in the storm of last night? Vah, the apostles were enthusiasts, visionaries! But the Prophet was at Capernaum, notwithstanding the fact attested by hundreds, that no other ship had left the other shore until morning.

Capernaum had oft ere this been made the goal of a leisurely jaunt by the "Princess of Magedan." This day was bright, the air clear and tempered by last night's winds, just the temptation of a journey on foot. Miriam advised the two "Greeks" of her resolve to travel to the city to meet the Prophet, and they heartily agreed to travel "with the herd." The last words were Rhode's. When Callidora's brow darkened at the uncouth allusion, she added, laying her arm about the shoulders of her critic:

"To meet the Good Shepherd." Then Callidora laughed at her folly to misinterpret the mischief of the cheerful damsel. They departed towards noon.

When they arrived at Capernaum they were severely taken aback at the excitement of the crowds standing about chattering and scolding most indignantly. Miriam was recognized by the Capernaites, too, through Callidora, who was known to be a member of her household, and the sharp-tongued scandalmongers pointed her out to the arrivals from the opposite shore as "the Sinner," "the Harlot of Gan-Sar" (they repeated the slogan of Simon with puerile gusto), so that those whom she passed drew their garments aside in open contempt of her. But she proceeded humbly, with eyes cast down, and the right length of her linen cloak held over her breast, thus unconsciously exposing the richly embroidered coat that fell down to the ankles. It was woven of the finest linen, and gored and laced with silver and gold braid; its sight aroused not so much the contempt as the envy of the dastardly hypocrites from both sides of the Lake.

As they passed along the lines of admirers and maligners,

running the gauntlet of malignant abuse and envious praise — for the beauty of Miriam and Rhode and the ascetic figure of Callidora found no fewer admirers than Miriam's past found judges — they garnered a store of news most discouraging. Here they would snatch up a bit of indignation over the “eating of *his* flesh”: “who has ever heard such insanity!” And there, a shred of an argument: “I do not want eternal life, if I cannot attain it unless I eat *his* flesh and drink *his* blood”; and at another group: “I will forego the glory of the resurrection in the last day, if the eating of human flesh must assure it. This saying is hard; who can hear it?” and similar outbursts of resentment and exasperation.¹ And they were the same men that had only yesterday shouted at him: “Hail to the King!”

What had happened? Had he announced that he would lay his body on the Altar of Holocausts to be immolated, and then to be eaten by the adorers of Jahveh, as the remedy of salvation? —

Miriam hurried as fast as propriety would permit. He must be near the seacoast, for the crowds came from that direction, each succeeding band more noisy and vehement than the preceding in its denunciation of the Prophet. What had he done? When she arrived at the beach, she saw him standing amid his chosen twelve, as calm and serene as the moon in the sky. A few remnants of the multitude were still clinging to hedges, corners, and landings, and among them she concealed herself as near the hallowed spot, where he stood, as possible. She arrived at the moment when Simon fell on his knees before the Prophet, and all but Judas, the Keriothite, followed his example. She heard Simon's first, glorious confession: “Rabbi, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have known that thou art the Messiah, the Son of God!”

She was anxious to hear *his* reply to this unmasked and

¹ John, 6, 53, ff.

unmistakable proclamation of his divine origin. Would he correct Simon, and tell him that he came only as a messenger of God, not as the consubstantial Son of God? This moment must decide, not only his mission — for she doubted not that he was the Anointed of the Lord — but his origin, if it were divine. Would he praise Simon for his insight and courage and fidelity? Nay; Simon's confession had been demanded a thousand times, and had now been elicited by the announcement of a mystery,¹ the conception of which would either not be allowed by the frailty of human intelligence, or would be banished as a chimera. But this Man Jesus was so much alive to the consequences of his revelation that he challenged the experience and historical faith of his hearers, and so far elevated above the suspicion of courting the applause of the rabble that he established a direct contrast between his speech and their olden traditions.² His answer was a new revelation of his absolute supremacy over the opinions of men. He replied sorrowfully: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"³

At the last words, Judas also sank on his knees, his face darkening with precipitate confusion.

When Rhode saw Judas go down, she roguishly nudged Miriam with her elbow, and said: "He is the devil; have a care of him!"

It was a plain manifestation of the Prophet's divinity. He did not praise Simon; it was evident that Simon deserved rather blame than praise, for having deferred his profession of faith until so late; he did not warn the "devil" before condemning him, because such disbelief was inexcusable in one so long the witness of the life, doctrine, and deeds of his Master: he breaks forth with bitter complaint, that even among his friends there should be one to disown him in his heart.

Miriam was freed from another burden: the Master

¹ The Holy Eucharist.

² John, 6, 32 and 49.

³ Ibid. 71.

knew Judas; but knowing him, and knowing him so well that he unhesitatingly called him a devil; not his devil, his adversary; but a very fiend and demon — he tolerated his hateful society! “He will accept my face,” she said to herself with inward exultation; but she was yet afraid to inconvenience the Good Shepherd with the care of a diseased sheep.

Rhode read her thought from her beaming eyes and anxious face. “Go to him,” she urged; “cast thyself at his feet; he will receive thee!”

But Miriam was afraid of her Savior.

CHAPTER XII

FORGIVEN

WHEN Miriam was again alone with her two young companions, returning to her mansion from Capernaum, she felt the regret of her timidity more keenly with every step. She should have braved the jeers of the gaping crowds, even the malignant leer of Judas, and have asked pardon at the Master's feet. But the heartless insults of her neighbors stung her so cruelly that she had not the courage to expose her heart to a fresh scourging at a time when she sorely stood in need of encouragement and comfort. Her heart was brimming with a tender and sacred love for him: a new experience in her life. Oh, she would brave the danger of any torment, even of death, at the next opportunity of protesting to him her burning desire to be made pure once more, and to be renewed!

The rest of that day she spent in loving converse with her "little sisters," as she called the two strangers, and the greater part of the ensuing night in silent prayer. The Master had now repaired to Naim, whither she followed him in spirit; in truth, her mind was unceasingly occupied with the thought, her heart, with the love of him. She was penetrating deep into the mysterious world which his word was disclosing in her own heart and soul. Ever and anon she questioned the maidens concerning this work, of which they spoke to her, and that sermon, which Rhode had either heard from his lips, or received from the lips of John. She read the psalms of David with a new understanding, and the prophecies of Isaiah with a new light, and wondered how

she could have stubbornly closed her eyes to the truth so long and her heart to the love that had ever been asking admittance from the day she had first seen him at Bethsaida. It occurred to her also, that her brother Eleazar had not vainly pointed out the passages of the prophets of old, which contained a luminous description of his wonderful birth, his adoration and presentation, when their mother related the strange tales that had been told of him in his infancy. Indeed she recalled the words which Eleazar said to her and Martha on the day when she left their father's house to take possession of her maternal inheritance in Galilee: "We shall yet see him rise, ere we go to our graves, like a star, to enlighten the shadows of death in which we are enshrouded." — What joy it should be to them to receive her back, cleansed, purified, readmitted to the communion of Israel, under the roof of their father's house!

At Naim the Prophet had raised a young man from the dead, the very day when he cleansed Callidora and cast the demons out of Miriam. He had now returned thither, presumably to strengthen the faith of its inhabitants, who had these days become the prey of the yelping scribes and Pharisees. But after six days he was again at Capernaum, preaching in the market place and on the banks of the Lake, which were always besieged by fishermen, merchants and idlers, natives and strangers.

It was Simon, the chief Pharisee's, birthday. He arranged a great feast, and invited the prominent members of his sect from Capernaum and the neighborhood. The people made it the topic of their gossip even before it had begun; Simon was wealthy, and had promised to make it a memorable feast. His house was one of the most magnificent mansions of the town, and his dining hall large enough to accommodate a hundred guests comfortably, and two hundred onlookers along the walls.

The curious had preceded the guests when the hour of the

banquet had come, and stood about, admiringly and enviously eying the splendor of the decorations, and the lavishness of the culinary preparations. Fleet-footed damsels were running hither and thither draping the couches, and arranging and rearranging the crocks and goblets and tumblers and plates and dishes. But as the wind blows away chaff, they disappeared simultaneously at a signal from the hand of the chief steward.

The report of Simon's extraordinary celebration had also been carried to the neighboring Magedan. Rhode expressed a desire to see "a right big" Jewish banquet, to compare with the feastings which she had witnessed in the villas of Roman generals at home. Miriam was not unwilling to gratify her childish wish, especially as she herself would go to Capernaum to hear the Prophet, and, if possible, to meet him, and pour out her heart to him. The paschal feast was near, and Jesus might at any hour set out for the Holy City to be in time for the first day; she must seek him now, or perhaps never meet him again, because she had learnt that Annas and Caiphas and the other Pharisees bore him deadly hatred. Who knows but that they may make away with him; there were always ready daggers at the service of such men. But she shuddered at the thought that the priests of God should think of murdering the Messiah!

What troubled Miriam most, however, at the hour of her departure upon her penitential journey, was the question of how to array herself. Should she put on sackcloth, and strew her head with ashes, or array herself in the princely robes of her estate? It would be more becoming, she thought, to wear the humble garments of the lowly Jewish maidens on such an errand of sorrow, than to appear in the attire of a princess. Still, she had given scandal in silk and purple; why not repent in the same magnificent attire, by which she was distinguished far and wide as the _____: she could not again muster sufficient courage to pronounce that

name of disgrace even in her mind. She trembled when she unrolled before her view the scene of her meeting with the Prophet: Pharisees would surely be standing about, and heartless scoffers; and her ordeal would be terrible to undergo; and she fled to Rhode.

The flaxen-haired little mischief was standing in her room at the window, pelting someone outside in the garden with dried dates and fresh berries from a dish filled with delicious fruit, which she held in her hand. Miriam stole up behind her, to see whom she made the object of her pranks, and looking over her shoulder beheld Omer busy weeding beneath the window, and now and then brushing with one hand across his neck, probably to drive away the bug that he thought was annoying him; for Rhode dexterously aimed her missiles at his bare neck. At last he looked up: Rhode withdrew hastily, and fell backward upon her mistress, who caught her in her arms, and gently chid her for such frolicking. The dish had fallen out of the window, and on Omer's head; but he and the little "witch," as he called her, were on such good terms together, that he only grinned, sat down on the spot, and made a feast on the wind-fall.

Rhode had long made herself ready for the jaunt to Caper-naum. She was fully dressed in her best robes, wore a string of yellow pearls, a gift of her kind mistress, around her milk-white neck, had her luxuriant light hair arranged, Greek fashion, in a knot with two heavy braids encircling the head, and a white veil laid over her shoulders to be drawn over the hair as soon as they would set foot in the open. Her outer robe was of cream-colored silk, with her proverbial light blue borders. About the waist she had wound a blue and white silk sash, the ends of which, tasseled with silver knots and fringe, reached down to her ankles. Her feet were shod with light white sandals: she had evidently not taken the dusty road into her calculation. But she was to

appear among the *élite*; and a Roman maiden knew the proprieties of such a rare occasion!

Miriam briefly acquainted her with her doubts concerning the propriety of dressing up for her own errand of penance. But the quick wit of this *naïve* child of the world perceived the difficulty at the first glance.

"Why should the Princess of Gan-Sar," she counseled, "appear in rags and tatters before her King? Let not the people mistake thy person; they have reviled thee in silk and fine linen: let them see thee pay homage to thy Savior in the finest thou mayest find in thy cedar chests." And the rogue added: "If thou wilt wear sackcloth, wear it later. But thy repentance is his triumph: grace it as best thou mayest, if only to the greater discomfiture of his enemies and thine!"

But Miriam compromised with her wily counselor. She arrayed herself in all the glory that a costly wardrobe and a refined taste could suggest; but she concealed her princely raiment under the folds of a plain blue mantle, the hood of which she drew over the costly gold-embroidered veil that lay like the white blossoms of spring over her rich, beautiful hair.

Callidora promised that she would spend the time of their absence in prayer and supplication for her good mistress; and they set out with anxious hearts.

When they reached the city, the day was far spent; they had had so much to confer about on the way, and Miriam's heart was heavy. Much as she longed to receive her pardon at the hands of the Son of God, her experience of merciless abuse at the hands of the Pharisees and their admirers made her heart quake with fear at the prospect of perhaps still more inhuman mercilessness than she had so far experienced. And at the first step into Capernaum she learnt that the Prophet had been called to the banquet of Simon!

If a dagger had been thrust into her breast, she would not have been more frightened than at this news. She was

to ask forgiveness in the house of Simon, the father of Ben Hadassah, before so many of Simon's ilk! Nay; she would wait at the gate until he should come out, and she would cast herself into the dust of the street; but go in among these wolves? Nay, never!

Rhode was glad that she had a companion, and would bring all her strategy and wit into play, to induce her mistress to witness the banquet in the hall. Without much ceremony she raised the hood of Miriam's mantle, spread it out, and pulled it down over the surprisedly remonstrating eyes: "Come with me," she pleaded: "I shall hoodwink the old hawk, that he may not detect his prey; trust me to work a prank!"

Miriam protested most earnestly; but Rhode pleaded and begged. "The Prophet may be lost in the night after the feast," she persisted; "keep him in sight, so that thou mayest offer thy petition at the first opportunity. '*Fortes fortuna iuvat,*'¹ my countrymen say; seek him, and he shall let thee find him gracious."

Miriam had resolved either to return to her house absolved and reconciled to God, or to follow the Prophet to Jerusalem; but she would not return with this heart full of remorse and longing and love: she must find peace, would she not despair! The dread that the Prophet might disappear and conceal himself to spend the night in prayer, at last persuaded her to acquiesce in Rhode's plans, and enter the banquet hall.

Simon was standing at the door; they must pass him. Rhode entered first, and in order to distract his attention went up to him, and stretching her form, whispered in his ears: "Thou art a very prince among thy fellows." He pretended to resent this undue familiarity, stepped back, and measured the audacious damsel from head to foot with darkening eyes. But she smiled at him most sincerely, for she had tricked him; Miriam had already passed behind

¹ "Luck assists the brave."

him unscrutinized. And when Rhode looked back at the old hypocrite a moment after he had glowered at her, she saw him wink to himself, and throw back his shoulders. "He is very sensitive," she whispered to Miriam.

They took up a position at a pillar in view of the door. Both eagerly scanned the long rows of couches and tables at which many of the guests were already placed; but the Prophet had not yet come. Leisurely they watched the ceremonies of reception: as soon as a guest would enter, Simon would open his arms to bid him welcome, and kiss him on the cheek. Then a servant would loosen his sandals, and wash his feet kneeling and wipe them with a towel. After that, one of the stewards would conduct the guest to his assigned place.

Among the last arrivals, with three or four more, entered Jesus of Nazareth. Simon kissed each one; but when the Prophet presented his cheek for the kiss of welcome, Simon turned aside to a steward with a malicious grin to give him an order. Jesus bowed his head, and followed the steward — to the very head of the table, where he was assigned to the couch at the left of the host's. He had held out his foot to the servant: but the servant ignored him and was making grimaces at a comely damsel, who was pointing a finger of scorn at the Man from Nazareth.

When all the guests had reclined on their couches, a bevy of gaudily dressed maidens were flurried out by the steward from behind a curtain at the inside of the hall. They scattered among the tables, and began to pour ointment on the heads of the guests and distributed it with deft and delicate fingering. It was a common custom, and attracted no attention, save that of Miriam, whose heart had caught fire at the insult offered the Master at the door; and that of the Pharisees, who seemed to be prepared for the spectacle of the grossest insult to be offered an invited guest; and Miriam's apprehensions were realized. The maid, who anointed

the head of Simon, ostentatiously passed the Prophet over!

There was a burst of smiles of derision along the row of tables, and a ripple of astonishment along the walls lined with gaping curiosity. The Prophet remained silent, and retained his composure, but for a line, not of regret, but of sadness, appearing at either corner of his fine mouth, the delicate cut of which his beard did not conceal.

Miriam's face was burning with indignation. She whispered to Rhode, while she gave her a gold coin from her purse: "Fetch me a flask of the most precious ointment from the booth of the Damascene merchant opposite the house!" Rhode flew away.

Miriam's eyes were moist with the tears of anger. It was to be expected that Simon, who had several times brutally insulted her in rude disregard of her estate, would ply his coarse wit also on the hated teacher. He had called him to his table to insult him before the leaders of the city, and to disgrace him before the "ignorant rabble." She was herself a sinner, a suppliant; but she would season her repentance with a condiment which should render it a triumph of her Savior. When Rhode returned in a few moments, Miriam received the flask and slipped it into her bosom. Without the loss of a moment she threw off the blue mantle into Rhode's ready arms, and stood like an apparition in the light of the spacious hall, all clad in the raiment of a queen, and bedecked with the most precious gems. All eyes were instantly turned upon her. Simon recognized her, and his face turned purple with anger; Jesus recognized her — and a smile of triumph in his eyes beamed a warm welcome to the "Sinner."

She proceeded up the length of the hall amid the silent admiration of the spectators and the exasperation of the offended guests. Her gait was hurried, but yet not undignified; her slender, tall figure, her glorious attire, her mag-



FORGIVEN

nificent hair gleaming with a golden sheen through the finely woven meshes of the veil, and flowing loose over shoulders and back; her eagerness, the resentment of her eyes tempered with unspeakable happiness and love, lent charm and grace to her every movement. Without a word she sank on her knees at the feet of Jesus, kissing them passionately over and over again, while her tears streamed on them in hot torrents of sorrowing love. Then raising her head, she loosed her veil, and began to wipe his feet with her magnificent tresses, and anointed them with the spikenard she had bought, an ointment of such rich and refreshing fragrance that even the idle spectators along the walls sniffed the air with delight. She remained on her knees, her head and shoulders humbly bowed over his feet, awaiting her sentence. Her silvery veil lay gathered in folds about her shoulders, her hair still enveloped the feet of the Master.

It was a spectacle so affecting, and at the same time so grand by the sincerity of the "Sinner," and by the calm majesty of the honored Master, that the scorn of the host was forced down his throat. His eyes bulged with envy and rage, his fat cheeks were suffused with a purplish hue. "Vah!" he exclaimed, making a gesture of contempt with his left hand at Jesus of Nazareth, and pointing the thumb of his right at Miriam. But Jesus raised his voice, gently and calmly interrupting the savage compliment of the Pharisee, and diverting his attention from the object of his anger, and said:

"Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee."

And Simon answered: "Master, speak!"

He did not now deny his distinguished guest the honor of his popular title.

Jesus continued:

"A creditor had two debtors, the one of whom owed him five hundred pence, and the other, fifty; and as neither could pay him, he forgave them both. Which, therefore, of the two loveth him more?"

Simon replied: "I suppose he to whom he forgave the greater debt."

And Jesus said to him: "Thou hast judged rightly."

Then he turned to the woman, and said to Simon:

"Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house, and thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss; but she hath not ceased to kiss my feet since she came in. Thou didst not anoint my head with oil; but she hath anointed my feet with ointment; wherefore I say to thee: Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less." And then he bent forward, and said to Miriam: "Thy sins are forgiven thee!"

She again embraced and kissed his feet mid transports of unutterable happiness; and while some Pharisees voiced their scandal at his words, muttering about "blasphemy," he gently withdrew his feet from her embrace, and laying his right hand upon her head said with great tenderness: "Woman, thy faith hath made thee safe; go in peace!"

At the door Rhode received her reconciled mistress with open arms. But going out, Miriam took the fivefold string of pearls from her neck, and dropped it into the hands of a poor widow, who was timidly standing by with a poorly clad child on her arm, stretching forth her hand for alms; she unwound the golden cord, beaded with gems, which was twined into her hair, and cast it to a cripple in the entrance. Then she emptied her purse, giving a piece of silver or gold into every hand held out to her, and departed in the night. The Master arose, and left the hall without having honored the "hospitality" of the hypocrite.

Book Third

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CHAPTER I

AN AWFUL DOOM

THE treason to which Ben Hadassah fell a victim scarcely produced any effect, save the temporary demoralization of the “patriots” in Judea; but the immediate and lasting result of the transient disquietude was the marking of Shemaiah, the instigator of the despicable transaction, as the next victim of their common resentment. Men act logically on given principles, right or wrong, even if they be thieves.

Shemaiah had conceived various reasons why Ben Hadassah must be removed. His own authority was threatened; for although he was not a chief himself, having never been appointed because he occupied a position of honor and trust than which there was no higher in the gift of the confraternity: he was the keeper of the principal place of refuge, of their rendezvous, in Judea; yet he was growing out of the respect of the hotspurs who constituted the band in Judea. And since the appointment of the dashing young Pharisee to the captaincy, the old man was losing prestige. Hence, the young man must be put out of the way.

Then there was a reckoning to make with that dire prophecy of Anna. Shemaiah had unconsciously come to admire the pluck and apparent nobility of character of the young chief, and had borne him an esteem that gratified his old soul as with the soothing balm of requited affection; a very intimate friendship had sprung up between them, despite the “Patriarch’s” reluctance: he would not “go down” with Ben Hadassah; hence Ben Hadassah must be put out of the way.

When Shemaiah found the women, one dead and the other starving, it was an easy task to enlist in his cause, by means of their sympathy, the hatred of the twenty-four guards of the Caves. He unfolded to them the unreasonable plans of the chief and his insane ambition, and contrasted them with his heartless cruelty, to condemn to a death of the utmost terror two maidens, one as harmless as a dove, the other repentant, and as beautiful as the rising sun, and persuaded them that the man who waged war against the merciful God had no claim to the crown of Israel. Then he informed the tribune of Thella of Ben Hadassah's proceedings, and knew that he had once again escaped the fate threatened by the dying prophetess: and Ben Hadassah had been put out of the way.

But when the act of his treason became generally known in Judea, the members informed Annas, the father-in-law of Caiphas, the high priest, and Shemaiah's doom was sealed, especially since report had it that the fall of Ben Hadassah had contributed so much toward the rise of the Prophet of Nazareth. One evening, as Shemaiah was conducting two emissaries of Annas, in the guise of merchants, toward Jerusalem from the Caves, where they had been set upon and robbed by previous agreement, he was apprehended, and imprisoned on a charge of conspiracy with highwaymen, to await the arrival of Pontius Pilate, for judgment, and the sentence of the Roman crucifixion. He was cast into the dungeons of that cold nest of rock, the fortress Antonia.

Ben Hadassah had been brought back from the seat of the governor at Cæsarea under sentence of death by the cross, and was incarcerated in one of the dark and damp dungeons of the man-eater Antonia.

The fortress Antonia was to every prisoner the very entrance of hell. The dungeons were under ground, three and four tiers deep. No light ever befriended its chambers of death, no fresh air ever fecundated the infernal breath of

its living corruption. Delivery out of its bowels was a blessing, even if delivery was made to the cruel Roman cross. The unfortunate tenants of its rocky holes, when brought up to the light, would reel with sheer delight of the blessing of sunshine and air, and totter to the bed of shame and torment with a smile — if they were not allowed time enough to taste to the full the sweetness of the grace of living.

At such periods as this, when the spirit of liberty was rife in the breasts of the Jews, the single cells generally held more than one occupant. But this was a greater punishment in view of the neglect of cleanliness in the prison. The condition of those lost creatures in the hands of Jewish or Roman justice shames the brutality of barbarians. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you!"

Ben Hadassah had been made the companion of a murderer under sentence of death; but on the day that Shemaiah arrived, the decaying body of his companion had been fished out of the filth of the dungeon, and the new arrival was dropped into it. Four days passed before either uttered a sound, except a sigh or sob, or a malediction. Their misery was so great and help so far removed, that they bore the unbearable in sullen despair. But on the fifth day, whether in the day or the night, was of no consequence, the younger prisoner moaned as in a dream: "Hadassah, Hadassah, my mother dear! who would have foretold this misery for thy child!" And a little later: "My brow is indeed bare of the myrtle¹ wreath that I coveted; but thy love endureth in my heart: pray for me!"

Shemaiah, who had reclined against the wall, standing in filth ankle-deep, and courted sleep in vain, heard the humble petition, and knew by the voice, and by the name of Hadassah, that Gad Ben Hadassah was his companion in misery. He resolved immediately to strangle him rather than to reveal

¹ Hadas, myrtle, from which is formed Hadassah, the name of his mother.

his identity. Was the prophecy to be accomplished with this youth? Nay, he would rid himself of this prospective companion of his “going down” before it would be too late!

But before he thought that it would be “too late,” another condemned man was thrust in upon them: a prisoner who protested loudly against such inhuman treatment. He was either inclined to be self-sufficient, or drunk, or did not know the business methods of Rome in the administration of justice to criminals once heard and convicted. After the trap was closed above him he stalked about in the filth, fuming, and cursing in Greek, Latin, and Aramaic, calling upon Jove and the devil in the same breath to destroy his adversaries. He took hold of Shemaiah by the throat in the darkness, and threatened that he would drown him in this “Jewish mud,” if he would not honestly confess his name and guilt. The old man was forced against his pride to cry his name aloud and confess that he was confined as a robber; but he protested his innocence, and sent the brutal companion opposite to the trembling figure of Ben Hadassah. The new arrival seized the young man by the throat, and shook him, until his frame collapsed in his hands. Then he asked in the imperious tones of a demon: “Who art thou?”

The young man gasped: “I am Ben Hadassah; let me die in peace!”

“And I am Silas, thy friend,” the ruffian replied; “dost know more about that toad in the corner?”

“I know nothing; I have never spoken a word to him; but by the sound of his voice, I judged him to be Shemaiah, as he hath said, the ‘Patriarch’ of the Caves.”

Silas was in a state of excitement bordering on insanity. But Ben Hadassah, who had believed him dead on the report of his spies, and who had been chastened into sobriety by his long imprisonment, was also stung to the quick by the

unexpected companionship, and the brutality of his erstwhile teacher.

"Let Shemaiah go to Hades in a chariot of fire," Silas resumed; "I have more pressing things to absolve than the treachery of such a jackal. I have deposited a large sum of money with Rapha, the chief steward of Miriam, thy friend — she is caught in the net of the new Prophet — which he agreed to expend for my liberation; and if he fails, my child, whom he desires to make his wife, shall not enter under his roof, by a father's curse! I shall soon be free; I will take thee with me; but yonder hyena may the devil devour living! It is his making that I have been driven into the net of the Romans. I will tell thee all when we are free."

Twice — presumably in twenty-four hours — the drop overhead was raised, and a loaf of bread and a jug of water let down into the darkness. The rest of the time hung heavy on the prisoners' hands. During these long and dismal hours Silas related his escape from death already reported as accomplished: "I stole the silver from the tents, because my perquisites were an inadequate reward of my services; they caught me fresh with the booty in my hands, and marched me out to hang. But two of the four executioners had a quarrel about the division of some woman's bangles, and were quarreling to have justice come by the dice. Not far from the camp in the dead of night they made a fire after pushing me into an old cistern, and cast dice for 'justice' sake. When I fell into the cistern, an old Jew, who had been waylaid, and thrust into the hole by marauders, received my aching limbs upon his stomach. I agreed with him to remain in the hole in his stead, if he would fasten the rope under his own arms when the soldiers would call for me. Thus he was liberated, and instantly swung upon a sycamore; they were drunk, and anxious to return to the camp after they had settled their dispute. I dug up a sharp stone, and cutting holes into the mortar, escaped from the cistern

the next night. I went to visit Rapha and my daughter, and was taken up as a suspicious character on the confines of Samaria, and here I am, a martyr to Roman justice! That band in Gaulon discovered their mistake of hanging the old merchant in my place, but not before my execution had been gloated over in the whole camp, and reported to every petty chieftain of the marauding Arabs. Thus I was safe from persecution until I was beyond their reach. But in Galilee every tribune and centurion was itching with the raiding fever, and many an innocent man was marched to the barracks on account of the suspicion created by thy capture through the treachery of that old badger. Let me once more see the light of day, if only to breathe long enough to denounce him also to Annas and Caiphas, that his stay in this hell of stench may not be shortened by the mercy of the cross!" Then he uttered an imprecation reeking with unspeakable blasphemy, and sank down into the pool of filth, insensible to the horrors of his all too readily yielding couch.

When Shemaiah heard from the dull splash that his bloodthirsty enemy had fallen in a helpless stupor, perhaps in a fit of epilepsy, or in the clutches of a demon, he instantly resolved to put him out of the way without creating a suspicion of murder. He groped his way to the prostrate figure, and turning him over on his face, pressed him down with both hands in the mire, until the slight convulsions, tremors, and gulps, which marked the ebbing away of life, had ceased. Silas lay dead, suffocated in the slime of this revoltingly dirty dungeon!

Ben Hadassah, at whose feet the murder was being committed, shuddered at this prelude of his own death struggle with the old hyena in this darkness and on such slippery ground, where not greater strength, but greater determination of murder, would decide the combat. But Shemaiah slunk back to the opposite side of the cell with a curse. Perhaps he was afraid of the advantages of strength and agility

on the side of his young opponent, and would rather wait until he could attack him in his sleep, or at some other unguarded hour.

After many hours of silence so intense that the prisoners could hear each other's heart-beats and the fluttering of their breath, the square drop in the ceiling was again opened, and the voice of Machias, the keeper of this tier, gruffly called down the name of Silas. Neither prisoner responded. After another, much louder, and angry call, the keeper, a man of massive proportions that seemed to consist mostly of bone and yellow leather, unsheathed his dagger, and taking its blade between his teeth fastened a stout rope to a ring in the door, and climbed down, peering into the dark with the lurking attention of a cat. At the foot of the rope he took the dagger in his hand, and once more called for Silas. Shemaiah, who was pressed against the wall like a dismal shadow, pointed toward the spot where Silas was lying in the mire. But Machias did not leave the rope; he commanded the old man to drag him out of the dark. "Death by apoplexy," the keeper growled, and climbed out.

Some time later, the corpse was removed, and after it, also the prisoners. The cell was cleansed, and Ben Hadassah put back, but Shemaiah was transferred to another dungeon. The money of Silas had worked a wonder.

The short hour that Ben Hadassah was allowed to spend under guard in the half dark rock corridor, until the mass of filth had been taken out of his infernal abode, revealed the ravages that the want of light and air, and the agonies of so many wakeful nights, had wrought in him. He was a mere shadow of the bold and proud youth who had so often been made the object of loving compliment by the coy maidens of Jerusalem, and whose magnificent physique had been the envy of his fellows. His lips were so tightly drawn that they barely covered the teeth, his cheek-bones stood out before the deep-sunken feverish eyes, like a bank before

dark twin caves. The bones of his hands and feet were plainly visible beneath the sallow skin; the frame was bent, the whole figure a very picture of sorrow; and he was not twenty-four years old! What a change since his blasphemous ascent of that hilltop in Chorazin, in the midst of the golden glow of the setting sun! And the end was not yet; before his vision rose the "tree of shame" within sight of the city walls; the jeering mob, the taunting crowds of those whom he had meant to serve! There was not one consoling thought in his mind, but that of his sainted mother: "Hadassah," he moaned, "mother mine! Forget me not!" The thought of his father he put aside, as often as it came, with a smile as bitter as gall and wormwood; "I have no father! — Will he be there, when they shall raise me up on the cross? Will he relent — and forgive?" —



CHAPTER II

OUT OF THE GRAVE

MANY months had passed since Miriam had arisen from the feet of the Master, cleansed and renewed. She had returned to her father's house in the retinue of the Master, and had been received with open arms, for the Master had made the salutation at his entrance: "Behold the lost sheep hath been found," and Eleazar, her brother, had answered: "And the Good Shepherd hath taken her upon his shoulders." Rhode had come with her; Callidora remained at Magedan to take the place of the mistress in her absence. Miriam had followed the Master, with his Mother and a few other pious women, among whom was also the wife of Chuza, the steward of Herod, ministering to his necessities out of her substance during his tedious journeys.

Galilee had rejected him. The leaders checked him in every move, and knew how to stifle the rising faith and enthusiasm of the masses by calumny and insinuation too wicked to be contradicted, except by his spotless sanctity and his undismayed candor. He had unmasked the hypocrisy of his adversaries before the people; but they understood not the Spirit of Truth that actuated him in undertaking the dangerous task. They would not learn that he was come from God to fulfil the prophecies concerning the Emmanuel. Their minds were filled with dreams of a King who would wrest Palestine from the grip of the Roman, and make the rest of the world, not his own, but their footstool. They had lost the taste of the hopes of their ancient

fathers; glory and wealth, liberty and domination, were their hearts' desires.

And he had bidden them farewell at Nazareth, his home, whose inhabitants would even have cast him down a precipice, had he not stayed their hands with his marvelous power.

At the approach of the Pasch he had returned into Judea, and for a short time now had digressed into Peræa, beyond the Jordan, where he was teaching. The enmity of the leaders in Jerusalem had become so pronounced and so manifest that the Master had already several times predicted to his twelve chosen disciples his impending consummation. They indeed did not believe that he was foretelling an event certain to come, but rather that he was expressing a fear of what they themselves knew would probably come to pass, if the high priests could quietly lay hands on him. So far the popular enthusiasm which bordered on religious veneration had protected him against open violence from the lawyers and Pharisees, but not always against their ridicule in public, and least against their petty, puerile, and insidious persecutions. They dogged his steps with their spies, they dissected his every public utterance; they vilified him by calumny, and discounted his wonderful deeds, at last openly ascribing them to demonization: "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil; by Beelzebub dost thou cast out demons!" they railed at him. They did not deny the fact of the demons going forth at his command; but they would not concede "that the devil's kingdom could not stand, if Beelzebub were divided against himself," as he turned the argument against them.

There were evil days awaiting him, if he would visit the Holy City at the approaching paschal feast; the people were bent upon receiving him with the honors due their Messiah, the Son of David. This dignity and office they no longer doubted the God of their fathers had placed upon his

shoulders, according to the message of Isaiah:¹ "For a child is born to us, and a Son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace. His reign shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace; he shall sit upon the throne of David, and over his Kingdom." But the leaders were determined to intercept him on the highroad of triumph, lest they should lose their control over the affairs of the nation, as they had lately, through his phenomenal success with the down-trodden "rabble," lost prestige, and had been forced to move in his shadow.

Behind Caiphas, the leader of the machinations against the Messiah, stood Annas (the deposed high priest and father-in-law of Caiphas, the actual high priest), a man of diabolical propensities. He was possessed of immense wealth, and wielded supreme power in Judean politics. His deposition had soured him against Rome, and particularly against the provincial pretors, to whose insatiable avarice and royal extravagance was principally due the desecration of the Jewish priesthood, and his own dismissal from the coveted first place in the Sanctuary. If this Man of Nazareth now allowed the people to make a public demonstration in his honor at his next visit, as was almost certain to happen in view of their unreserved rejoicing at the mere mention of his name, there was not only danger, but certainty of the governor's armed interference. The consequences were apparent. Pilate, who bore the Jews a hatred that would be satiated by nothing short of their national destruction, would have found the pretext, so long sought, for crushing them under the heels of his legions, to leave the accursed province a waste, with its inhabitants in the train of his triumph.

The Man of Nazareth must die!

These "political reasons" were reenforced by the per-

¹ Is. 9, 6-7.

sonal hatred of their sect. Both Annas and Caiphas were Pharisees, and to them had been most faithfully reported the unrelenting denunciations of their hypocrisy and official oppression made by the Prophet amid the concourse of thousands upon thousands of the “unreasoning” oppressed, both in Galilee and in Judea. They had heard his six-fold cry of woe over them:¹ they had heard him warning the people in the market places, that “unless their own justice abounded more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, neither would even they enter into the Kingdom of God”; the emissaries of the leaders, sent to entrap him in the solution of some intricacy of the Law, which they had hatched out in the sweat of their brow, had so often been laughed to scorn by the admiring populace, when he escaped their snares as lithely as a song bird, and turned the tables on them, that they dared no longer to tempt him, lest the people would take it into their heads to shield him against these assaults from their teachers. Their quiver contained no shaft not yet shot at him, and again turned upon themselves by this wonderful Man with a wave of his hand, and a smile of his lips, not of contempt, but of sovereign security. It truly seemed that he had ever himself arranged the circumstances of their shrewdest attacks with such skill and foresight that every move against him reflected discredit upon its directors. The revelation of their schemes had attracted the unsophisticated to him with more interest than his discourses, which they were too unwary to understand, and his works, which they long considered divine only by delegation, as the marvelous deeds of Moses wrought at the command of Jahveh. But since his last visit in Judea, the people had become alarmed with the stupendous conception that he was the Anointed of the Lord; for had not a few weeks ago a woman of the people raised her voice amid the multitude, and cried out: “Blessed is the womb that bore thee,

¹ Matt. 23, 13.

and the breasts that nursed thee!"¹ Ay, he must die, if things have come to such a pass that the people are losing their heads over him!

The death of Eleazar, the brother of Miriam and Martha, furnished the Pharisees with a new scourge. At his house the Master had often tarried to rest himself, and to rejoice in the pure affection and sincere reverence of these devoted souls. Eleazar had passed away almost without warning, and it was now the fourth day from his burial. The sisters had sent the Master word of their beloved brother's illness, but he had declined to respond to the tacit prayer that he should come and heal him: "Lord, he whom thou lovest, is sick." He who had healed so many others, let Eleazar die without stirring hand or foot in his behalf; nay, he tarried, after receiving the pressing petition, two days longer in Peræa.

Eleazar's family was highly connected in Judea and Jerusalem, and universally respected. The escapades of Miriam in Gennesar had not been laid at his door; his life, and that of his sister Martha, had been unremittingly sober and upright, after the manner of true Israelites in whom there was no guile. And latterly even the youthful deserter from Israelitic piety and patriotism was being forgiven, as she applied the large revenues of her dowry principally to works of charity and worship, and had completely turned away from her former evil ways. Her offense, except in the mouths of the Pharisees, had been one that was not beyond condoning; nay, many even admired her constancy, which had enabled her to escape so many dangers and temptations of her own courting, without sacrificing, besides the respect of the community, also that secret charm which graces the brow of the virgin with undimmed glory, even in the atmosphere of temptation and sin. She had preserved that precious jewel which does not lose its luster, except by

¹ Luke, 11, 27.

breaking; and those who honestly loved virtue thanked God in their hearts for having given her more protection than she had deserved, and thus having kept open for her the door of return to the fold of His people.

From the day of her conversion at the feet of the merciful Master, who had also recalled Levi from the company of the publicans and sinners, and induced a chief of the publicans, Zacchæus of Jericho, the wealthiest man of the city, to distribute half of his wealth to the poor, and to return fourfold for every injustice previously committed, she had been a model of zeal and purity to all who came in contact with her. And as if the fragrance of the ointment which she had poured on his feet were still lingering in her garments and her hair, everyone was quickened to a sense of gratification at her presence. Nor did her penance detract aught from her resplendent beauty; it was not sordid, as neither her sorrow had been louder than her sobbing.

The Pharisees would indeed have gloried to drive her through the country in sackcloth, and advertise their own sinlessness at the cost of the reviling of the "Sinner"; but the people had learned anew from the lips of the Great Prophet that it was vain to strew ashes on the head for sorrow, when the heart grieved not, and vain also to tear the garments for mourning, when the heart was not rent. Besides, Miriam had been clinging like a lovingly devoted daughter to *his* mother, than whom none was accepted anywhere in the country with greater honor and love. She did not array herself any longer in the princely robes of her estrangement from the faith and practice of her fathers; but her attire, had it even been sackcloth or sheepskin, could not conceal the winning smile of her lips, the soft kindness of her eyes, and the marvelous beauty and grace of her form. Her hair, once the snares for so many giddy youths, was covered out of sight under a veil of white, which framed her pure face as with a wreath of white

roses, and the blue outer veil only heightened the marble-like gleam of the transparent countenance. Her figure, wrapped in the snowy white garments of the maidens of her age and estate, could not, even with her best intentions, withdraw entirely from the gentle embrace of her scarf about the waist, and the graceful flexures of her linen coat. Her modesty was her only saving grace in the eyes of the envious and unkindly. But the favor of the friends of her girlhood, and even the awed respect and love of her elders, had returned to her as abundantly as she had enjoyed their kindness and indulgency of yore.

Many old friends were daily pouring into their mansion from Jerusalem to comfort the sisters in their bereavement. There were carping critics among them, it is true, whose tongue would not be still even in the face of their grief and sorrow; they were the friends of the dead Rabbi, Pharisees. But the general spirit of the crowds was well in keeping with the sad event.

Yet, when the fourth from the day of burial was now flaming out with the glow of the declining sun, even the most hopeful became faint-hearted with disappointment and doubt. Few had so much as thought that the Master could recall his dead friend from the grave. The raising of the young man of Naim, and of the young daughter of Jairus, had taken place in Galilee, a circumstance which of itself detracted from the glory of these deeds in the eyes of the jealous and self-sufficient Judeans. And the leaders in Jerusalem had taken great pains to sow the seed of doubt into the reports of these miracles, and to discredit the testimony of the Galileans, "the gullible" eye witnesses. Whatever might happen in Galilee would not affect the conviction of a Judean. Here was the opportunity for him to put the seal on his claim of being the Son of God, if the report of his Galilean miracles was true.

The two sisters themselves had in the bitterness of their

grief thought of him only as of the most intimate friend of the deceased. As long as their brother had been alive they had believed that the good Master would not let him depart from them, were he there; but when the darkness of death overwhelmed Eleazar, the pall fell likewise over their own hearts. The human heart is capable of only one great act at a time. Oppress it with grief, and make it insensible to joy; fill it with happiness, and dispel all gloom. And the mind follows the heart in its changing dispositions as faithfully as the shadow follows the sun. It is a master mind that stands above the promptings of a deep touched heart.

Would the good Master only come on a visit of condolence! But there was not a word of comfort from him.

Rhode had been sent out, at her own fervent request, beyond the hills, to reconnoiter. She had not been permitted to accompany the women on their wanderings with Jesus, except in the immediate neighborhood of Capernaum, and had, therefore, not seen John, her first instructor in the way of her new life, in many months. It would have been imprudent to make much in public of this fair child, whose every feature reflected the stranger. Her fairness was neither Grecian nor Roman, nor Phenician, nor at all that of the olive-hued, luster-haired Jewesses. Her face was too round for the Oriental as well as for the Grecian type; her hair was almost white, and as wavy and curly as a bunch of fresh flax on the distaff, an indication of her northern and densely barbaric origin; nor was her complexion other than would harmonize with such delicate framing: and her freedom and pertness of speech and manner brought her more readily than any other feature under the suspicion, although false, of being an untutored child of the woods. For she was born, and had been brought up and educated, in Rome; could read and write Greek and Latin, and had mastered the Syro-chaldaic dialect of Palestine in the seventeen or eighteen months of her sojourn among the

Jews so well that she often even attempted punning with no small success; more than once she set her listeners agog by the adroitness and subtlety of her quibbling.

But only as late as yesterday she endangered her reputation for cleverness with the Pharisees; and, with Miriam, for prudence and discretion. It happened in this manner: While she was gathering the blossoms of the rock-rose, which she used as an ingredient in her ointments, she overheard the conversation of a group of Pharisees secreted in a bower of grape-vines, in earnest conversation. They spoke of Simon, the disciple of the Prophet, who was preferred before the other eleven; "probably," they said, "because he was the first one to confess *his* divinity!" "Ay," one continued, "I heard him say it: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.' And the Man of Nazareth replied to the blasphemous flattery: 'And I say to thee, that thou art Cephas; and upon this Cephas I will establish my elect.' It happened at Cesarea Philippi,¹ not long after Jesus had asked his audience of gullible Chorazinites and Cesareans to eat his flesh and drink his blood. It was a blow in the face of reason and sense; and the people left him — to send him back to us."

One of the younger men, whom Rhode knew by the sound of his voice to be Hanan of Bethania, piped up: "Cephas meaneth 'rock'; quite adequate, if the Prophet would signify the stubbornness and dulness of his apostle." And another, an elderly man, replied: "For this once let Cephas be derived from 'Koph.'²"³ And they laughed together. Rhode's fair face flushed furiously, and her eyes sparkled with the fire of indignation. She raised her voice, and said, loud enough to be heard in the crowded court: "And is not also a Cephas³ your high priest?"

¹ Matt. 16, 18.

² Koph = monkey; the C in Cephas is hard.

³ Cephas, Caiphas and Caiaphas are only different forms of the same name.

At such contempt of the representative of God, the Pharisees drove her out of the garden, and into the crowds of mourners and idlers in the court and in the house. Her haste, and the recklessness with which she wound her lithe-some figure through the thickly massed crowds, caused a flurry of resentment and curiosity.

And the people inquired the cause of the Pharisees. In the first burst of anger they were too incautious to consider the effect of Rhode's wit on the crowd, and related the incident with indignation. But they had no sooner finished than a titter of derision ran the rounds of the court, and roused the curiosity of those inside the house, among whom the same scene was presently enacted. The Pharisees vowed vengeance on the head of the "barbarian," and withdrew shamefaced from the crowd.

Miriam took her to task as soon as she found her: "Why hast thou not spared the high priest from thy forward tongue!" The good mistress seemed to be very much embarrassed and vexed. "Why should *Simon* Cephas not be the high priest of the Son of God, when *Joseph* Cephas is the high priest of God the Father?" she answered, nothing abashed; and Miriam, not knowing whether this adroit answer was an evasion, or a prophecy in the mouth of this child, held her peace, and dismissed her with a dubious smile. Did the Master not, perhaps, choose the name of the reigning high priest to indicate tacitly to Simon what his future position should be in the family of the elect? Rhode had given proof of her intuitive perception of things difficult to grasp on so many occasions that Miriam laid up her words in her heart. Rhode revealed her wisdom piecemeal and, as it were, under pressure; but who knew what streams of revelation she had drunk from the lips of the gentle John, the favorite disciple of the Master?

At that juncture Miriam was glad to grant her request to seek some point of vantage, whence to watch for the

arrival of Jesus, and thus rid the visitors of her presence. For no one could tell what unpleasantness she would hold up to the mortified Pharisees at the next encounter, and the people made so much of her that the Pharisees watched her with growing anger. She would tell John, she remarked, before she departed; "he shall tell me of Simon's hard¹ name, why the Master imposed it upon him."

But at the time of the evening sacrifice, when Martha had again gone out to the tomb of her beloved brother, there was no sign of either Rhode or the Master. Miriam sat in the house, confident that he would come at all events, for he loved her brother tenderly, and knew that they stood in sore need of comfort from his lips and love. Some of their friends were making preparations to return to the city; the Pharisees had already departed, after posting their spies and messengers. There was an atmosphere of gloom over the house, in strange contrast with the flood of golden light in the western sky, and the soft beauty of the blossoms in the large gardens.

But at the end of the most beautiful hour of day, just before sunset, Martha, who had reclined her head in sorrow against the stone closing the mouth of the tomb, heard the hurried patter of Rhode's feet, and the agitated flutter of her linen coat, and, looking up, beheld the maiden standing at her side, all flushed and breathless. "He is here, come, come; he is awaiting thee at the town gate!" she gasped, and turned on her heels. Martha, who would not imitate the undignified haste of the youthful madcap, arrived at the gate, when Rhode had already engaged John in an animated discussion — the animation not being reciprocated by John.

As soon as Martha met the Prophet, she bowed humbly and reverently to him, and, with hands clasped before her breast, said amid her freshly flowing tears: "Rabbi, if thou

¹ Rock — Cephas; comp. "This speech is *hard*, etc." John, 6, 60.

hadst been here, my brother would not have died; but now also I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee."

Jesus answered her: "Thy brother shall rise again."

And now the woman falters! Did she doubt that he would fulfil his word instantly? Was the favor she had asked too great for his loving heart to grant? She tempts him timidly:

"I know that he shall rise again, in the resurrection at the last day."

She must make a new confession of her faith in his divinity:

"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live, and everyone that liveth, and believeth in me, shall not die forever. Believest thou this?"

And she answered fervently: "Yea, Rabbi, I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God, who art come into this world." And Jesus bid her call Miriam.

Now Martha had much less regard for dignity than before; her hope, so unspeakably sweet despite its unearthly grandeur, carried her away in haste.

The few moments of the interview between the Master and Martha, Rhode was silent. But now that Jesus turned toward the "Rock" (Cephas), and exchanged a few words with him, she sat down on the bank of the road, and drew John down at her side. Her conduct towards him might, perhaps, be best described as respectful familiarity, such as a child would manifest towards his father.

"Why did the Master change Simon's name into Cephas?" she began abruptly.

John looked at her, flushed with excitement as she was, smiled admiringly, and replied:

"Because he gave Simon the keys of the Kingdom of heaven."

"But what have the keys in common with the 'Rock'?"
"The Master will not remain —"

"Oh!" she exclaimed; "then Simon shall take the place of the Master? No wonder that he must be made as hard and stable as a rock. But Simon is a very thundergod," she added after a short pause of reflection; "why has the Master not selected thee to represent him? Thou art more quiet, more reasonable, younger, and more comely!"

But John answered gravely:

"What we are, we are by his selection. He hath chosen us; we have not chosen him. He can make a king of a shepherd."

"And," she supplemented him readily, "he can and he will rouse Eleazar from his untimely death; he was too young to die. He must first see the day of the new Kingdom."

She continued her prattling until Martha returned with her sister. When Miriam caught sight of the Master, she flew to him, and cast herself down at his feet, and sobbed: "Rabboni, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died." She did not refer to his omnipotence to remind him that he could even now relieve her grief by a miracle, but silently trusted that he would do as seemed good to him. It was sufficient for the love he bore them to know that the grief over his beloved friend's death filled their hearts to overflowing.

Miriam arose, and reclining her head on Martha's shoulder, wept with a grief so pitiable, that the visitors, who were coming up, wept with her. When Jesus saw her boundless desolation, he was visibly moved, and asked:

"Where have you laid him?" And his eyes also filled with tears.

The visitors noticed this token of love, and said:
"Behold, how he loved him!"

But some, by reason of embarrassment, it would seem, criticised:

“Could not he that opened the eyes of the man born blind, have caused that this man should not die?”

The whole procession moved toward the sepulchre, the people speculating on the manifest sorrow of the Master: “Would he repeat the feat of Naim in their midst? He loves the sisters; and especially Miriam, the beautiful, the dainty, the devout. Did he not say to her: Thy sins are forgiven thee, and she arose from his feet the lovely saint that she is? Did he not liberate her from demoniacal possession? He has power over evil spirits; why not over the spirit of the upright Eleazar? Come, let us see!”

Amid such exchange of reassurance, they arrived at the tomb hewn out of the soft stone of the hillside, and closed with a slab fitted into the opening, and sealed with clay at the seams, to prevent the unpleasant work of corruption from obtruding its effects upon the living.

Presently the Master, standing in front of the tomb, about a dozen paces distant, commanded them: “Take away the stone!” And Martha, heavy-hearted Martha, stumbled once more and whispered to him:

“Rabbi, *iam foetet*; ¹ he is now buried four days.”

And again he reproved her timidity with his gentle, sad rebuke, which he had repeated a thousand times before in the land of the Jews: “Did I not say to thee, that if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God?”

Some men had by this time scratched out the clay, and lifted the slab from the mouth of the tomb. There was no sign of life within this dark habitation of stench and decay. The eager eyes which peered into it perceived the figure of the dead man, swathed in linen, lying upon its back and emitting an odor most noisome. An owl which must have been a lodger in the tomb before its occupation by the silent

¹“By this time he stinketh.”

inhabitant, and must have fastened its claws in its death struggle on the inner edge of the door, had fallen out dead, as the stone was laid low. The people shuddered, and those in the first rounds covered mouth and nose with the ends of their cloaks.

Why this ceremony? Did the Master only wish to pay his last respects to a departed friend: why open the grave, and sully the memory of their beloved departed with this undesirable revelation of the horrors of the grave?

But Jesus now, raising his eyes toward heaven, prayed: "Father," — at this appeal to Jahveh, the God of their fathers, their hearts warmed anew — "Father, I give thee thanks, that Thou hast heard me; and I know that Thou hearest me always. But because of the people who stand about, have I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me."

Then raising his voice, and lifting up his right hand toward the tomb, he cried aloud:

"Eleazar, come forth!"

A moment of intense awe and expectation — and the dead man appeared at the mouth of the grave, with a napkin over his face, his hands in bands, and his feet enwrapped in linen cloths. It was difficult for him to walk.

"Loosen him," the Master said to the spectators, who were half dead with fright and amazement; "loosen him, and let him go!"



CHAPTER III

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

THE raising of Eleazar stirred the whole country. From the high priest to the lowest market woman, there was not a heart but was filled with the awe of the supernatural, or beat high with exultation at this incontrovertible proof of the Messiah's advent in their midst. Eleazar had been dead. He was not raised from the bier, or the deathbed, but from the tomb, already filled with the unmistakable signs of corruption. The Pharisees themselves had joined in the lamentations over his untimely demise, and had cast their scornful aspersions at the mysterious conduct of Eleazar's "all-powerful friend." The people also had doubted neither the death of the well-known and beloved young teacher, nor the power of the Prophet to preserve him from death; but they had not had sufficient faith to think of a resuscitation from a defiled grave. The Pharisees had cut off their retreat by their gloating over the absence of the Master, and his incomprehensible tardiness in coming to the assistance of the two sisters in their saddest days. "He is trapped," they had whispered among themselves, with significant winks and grins. They would have made more capital out of his delay, had they been absolutely certain that he would not at all respond to the message from the sisters. But if he should at last appear unexpectedly? — He had so often before dissolved their wiles and turned the anticipation of their triumphs into utter discomfiture — they would reserve their sharpest dart until the passing of that danger.

At the end of the fourth day they had stalked back to

Jerusalem with stately stride, heads erect, and faces wreathed in smiles of unspeakable satisfaction. "The Prophet was afraid to cope with the power of corruption; why, it would require the power of the omnipotent Creator of heaven and earth to retrace the work of death, and build up anew an organism which had by this time wholly disintegrated! The seal of death was no longer fresh upon the face of the dead man; it was already blotted out by dissolution. No young man here, scarcely grown cold; no young maiden, from whose face death had not yet completely wiped the blush of life! And no enthusiastic Galileans, but critical Judeans!—If he comes, and does not make the attempt to raise his dead friend—and they would goad him on to make it—they will laugh him to scorn; but if he makes the attempt, and fails, as fail he must, they will see to it that the halo shall be torn from his head. But—if he should not fail?—Then we will kill him!"

And the impossible had happened. In the ranks of his adversaries, this most manifest proof of his divinity had spread indescribable consternation. Their spies had reported the return of Eleazar to life at the simple command of the Master, given after an appeal to the Father for the divine testimony of his mission and his origin, not an hour later than it happened. The same evening, many of his enemies had come out to convince themselves of the truth: they beheld Eleazar, sitting at table with the Master and the sisters, whole and hale, as he had been before disease and death threw him down. And yet their hatred of the wonderful Man continued growing, and drew fresh nourishment from this graceful reprimand of their doubtance.

To comprehend such unreasoning malice, one must compare it with the destructive pride of the demons, the erstwhile glorious denizens of heaven, who bore their Creator a grudge for having made them His servants. The Pharisees were the hereditary leaders in Israel now for a genera-

tion; they would not abdicate for Jahveh's own resumed dominion.

Early in the morning of the next day, they gathered a council of war. "What do we?" was the slogan of the hour. "What do we — for this man doth many miracles!" Believe in him, accept him for what his Father in heaven, to whose testimony he appealed only yesterday with such miraculous effect, has attested him to be, the Son of the living God? Nay! "If we let him alone so, all will believe in him." What harm in this? — But we shall lose our hold upon the government, we shall have to serve him, "because he is opposed to our works!" "And the Romans will come, and take away our place and nation!"

Amid such wrangling, the high priest, Joseph Caiphas, arose, and bidding them be silent, cried at them:

"Ye know nothing! Neither do ye consider that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

Caiphas had plainly professed what was in every man's heart: The Prophet must die!

And from that hour they devised plans to apprehend him, and put him to death. Jesus, however, avoided their snares for the present, and sojourned a few days at Ephrem, on the borders of Samaria, until the sixth day before the Pasch. Then he returned to Bethania, to pay a farewell visit to his friends, and accept from them their last homage. In the Temple, Caiphas and his associates were on the watch for him, and wondered why he had not come to the city to undergo the ceremonies of purification previously to the celebration of the Pasch, as many thousands were then purifying themselves. But the word had been given out that the Prophet of Nazareth was under the religious ban, and that, therefore, "anyone knowing where he was, should tell, that they might apprehend him."¹

¹ John, xi, 56.

His case was lost before opening: they had cut him — or themselves? — off from the religious communion with Jahveh, their God, “because this man doth many miracles” in His name!



CHAPTER IV

A LOVE FEAST

SIMON, surnamed "the Leper," a neighbor and friend of Martha, and an admiring witness of Eleazar's resuscitation from the dead, had agreed with the generous hostess of the Master to prepare a feast for him in his own house. Martha had offered her services. She would arrange the repast, and wait upon their divine guest in person, contrary to the custom of the Jews, that no woman of estate should serve in the house of another. "She would serve the Master," she said, "in any place on the face of the earth. It is no disgrace even for a princess or a queen to wait upon the Son of God."

Miriam entertained the Master in Martha's house. She sat close to his feet, and let the balm of his words trickle into her soul, to refresh it, to fructify it, to make it whole. With her sat Callidora, who had that day arrived from Magedan in the company of Omer. Rapha was unable this year, he had sent word, to attend the paschal feasts, because of the scarcity of servants, and the disorders in Gennesar. Herod himself had gone up to Jerusalem with most of his military officials and the nomarchs of several cities, so that there was graver danger than ever of an incursion from the "Patriots" of the adjacent mountains. He gave Callidora, "his dove," into the care of the silent and solemn Omer, that she should again meet the Prophet after whom she had long been pining, and charged him upon his head "to shield her from all harm and hurt."

When Omer had delivered his charge into the arms of

Miriam, he looked about for the “white witch.” But Rhode had been ordered, much against her inclination, to assist Martha in the preparations for the banquet; she had so much to ask the Master. But before she had left the house, she had taken Miriam aside, and bound it upon her soul, to inquire whether “he were going up to Jerusalem to be consummated.” John had told her of the ominous prediction, which the Master had made two weeks before on the way from Jericho: “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him up to the Gentiles to be mocked, and scourged, and crucified; and the third day he shall rise again.” She had a presentiment of evil, that would not down. Was he to die so young, before he had seen his mission prosper? Would he give the honor of his triumph to Simon-Cephas? Or would he not be delivered up at this Pasch, but later, when he had established his Kingdom on the shoulders of Simon; for Simon seemed to her to be yet too unstable, and she told Simon what opinion she held of him, as soon as she had her hands free, and could slip out into the garden where the disciples were resting.

“Simon,” she said, within earshot of all the guests awaiting the call to the feast, “Simon, if they lay hands on the Master in the city, provide thyself with a sword to defend him, and do not run away. Fight, and do not talk! I had much rather see John in thy place.”

In the house the Master was conversing on the Kingdom of heaven, repeating to Miriam and Callidora the sweet doctrine of the Beatitudes, which had won the heart of Callidora, over a year before, and which now, framed in the Master’s own gracious words, and wreathed with his own lucid explanation, filled Miriam’s soul with exceeding wonder and wisdom. She dared not act upon Rhode’s injunction, for fear of destroying the happiness of this blessed hour.

She, too, dreaded the approach of the festival days for his sake; but as long as she could enjoy his presence she would not disturb his serenity by conjuring up the terror of the cross, of which he had recently spoken. The mere thought of seeing her loved one, the fairest of men born of woman, writhe in agony on the cross, so young, so gentle, so fair — the Son of God — made her heart contract with pain, and chilled her blood. She grew pale even now at his feet. One glance of encouragement from his eyes — and he arose to join his disciples in the garden. He had seen the thought of her heart, and dismissed her with its fresh bitterness. Miriam remained on her knees, and began to weep. Callidora spoke words of comfort to her, and nestled into her arms.

"Be of good heart, dear mother mine," she said. She called her former mistress mother, because she would no longer be her mistress. "The just must go through water and fire, to enter into refreshment. I tremble at the thought, that his word should be fulfilled now; but he, who called thy brother from the grave, shall not himself see corruption."

Miriam only answered: "I will be the Wild Rose on the tree of his consummation: dost thou remember my dream? Nay, it was poor Hannah! I dreamt of thee, too, even as now I fold my arms about thee — and the Good Shepherd laid thee into my arms, one of his lambs! Oh, that I must live to see it all fulfilled! But bless his mercy, who hath made a rose of a noxious nettle!" —

One of the guests, when he saw Rhode in the garden, showed evident signs of uneasiness, and strode about with a dark scowl about his mouth, nettled and troubled; it was Simon, the Pharisee of Capernaum, in whose house on a similar occasion, the — he swallowed his familiar epithet — the "*Rose*" of Gan-Sar had anointed the feet of the Man of Nazareth.

Simon of Bethania had intercepted him on the way to the city, and, because he was his kinsman, invited him to the banquet. When he heard that the hated Prophet would be the guest of honor, he accepted and remained; he might see or hear something to turn against the "impostor." But he feared the converted woman. Her life in Gennesar after she had arisen from the Prophet's feet had been a crying reproach to his own, sustained chiefly on the possessions of widows and orphans, which he had gathered under the protection of the Roman laws. He did not know that Miriam was then at the house of her sister.¹

The house of Simon, the Leper, wore a festive garb throughout. The doors and windows were wreathed with garlands of green and bloom, the walls were hung with rare tapestry, the tables decorated with beautiful vases filled with fragrant flowers, the couches covered with costly damask cloths, and the ceiling hung with silver chandeliers of many dozen candles each, mirroring their light a hundred-fold in the polished metal and the trembling gilt pendants; and all this pomp and glory for the poor Man of Nazareth! But Martha's love had come to the assistance of Simon's reverence, and taught him to expand his heart, and to loose the strings of his purse; and the old man was happy withal, thus to honor the Great Prophet of Israel.

Rhode and Callidora were ever at the side of Martha during the progress of the feast. But Rhode was not in her usual mood of vivacity. The words of John were ever ringing in her ears; and even now, when she saw the Master in pleasant converse with the host and Eleazar, she thought of the feast made in Rome to the gladiators before they entered the arena for mortal combat. If she were only old enough to be considered! She would ask the good Master to return to the region beyond the Jordan, where hatred was not massed together like an adder's nest, as it was in Jeru-

¹ Luke, 10, 38.

salem. But she was only a child, and none but Miriam was wont to take her seriously!

When the Great Cup¹ was being served, and went the round of the table under Martha's guidance, who kept it company with an ample jug, Callidora reclined on the carpet of the floor, at the head of the Master. Martha at first thought of correcting such faulty manners; "but," she said to herself, "it profits nothing to curb their desire of hearing him, and he seems not to object to the importunities of the children; let her alone." Rhode stood at the door, anxiously peering into the dark. The absence of Miriam had been noticed by the host, and had given occasion for repeated expressions of regret and astonishment. The Master had not answered; Simon of Capernaum was blushing with embarrassment, and busy Martha was now drawing down her sleeves preparatory to seeking and scolding her tarrying sister. Suddenly Rhode clapped her hands with delight, and Miriam, arrayed in all her former splendor, entered the flower-wreathed door.

The effect of her queenly appearance was manifold. Judas of Kerioth was startled, and raised himself on his knees on the couch, his face betraying the fire and quantity of the wine; Simon, the host, beamed with satisfaction; the Capernaite grew pale, and the Master's lips parted a little with a smile that betokened pleasure and sadness at once. All the others, even Martha and Callidora, stared at her in silent wonder.

She bore a large costly vase of precious ointment in her hands, and proceeded modestly toward the Master. At his feet she knelt down. In a trice the couches were deserted and the guests were thronging about her. But she with quiet devotion anointed the feet of the Master, and breaking the alabaster vase poured the last drops over his head. Then she wiped his feet with her hair and kissed them.

¹ The Cup of Thanksgiving, a sort of Loving Cup.

And the fragrance of the precious spikenard filled the house.—A few of the guests murmured about “the sinful waste.”

It was a scene of great solemnity: the festive hall, the quiet admiration, the graceful submission of the object of this singular manifestation of love, and the chaste fervor of the principal actress in the scene, all lent an atmosphere of piety and religiousness to the kiss that the noble maiden imprinted on the Master’s feet. It reminded one of the solemnity of the last hour at the bed of a dear friend: no tears, no wailing, but intense concern and grief pent up to burst forth in a storm at the moment of the final parting.

But ere the impression of the solemnity wore away, amid the reverent silence, Judas raised his voice, raucous from the heat of the wine, and protested petulantly:

“Why this waste? Could this ointment not have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?”

But the Master answered quietly, yet with emphasis on every syllable: “Why do you trouble this woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. The poor you have always with you, but me you have not always. For she, in pouring this ointment upon my body, hath done it for my burial. Verily I say to you: wheresoever these glad tidings shall be preached in the whole world, this also which she hath done, shall be told for a memory of her.”

Judas, shamed out of countenance, and filled with rage, left the hall; but when he passed Rhode, she angrily shook a finger in his face, and hissed at him: “Traitor!” Simon of Capernaum also left, and was seen hastening after Judas in the court, and stopping him for a hurried conference. Then they said grace, thanked their kindly host, and returned to Martha’s house, whence the Master, after a short while, went forth into the night to conceal himself, and to pray.

CHAPTER V

TRIUMPH

THE next day, the first of the week, the Master again appeared in Martha's house, early in the morning: and greeting his apostles, he sent Cephas and John into Bethphage, at the foot of Mount Olivet:

"Go into the town which is over against you; and when you enter, you shall find the colt of an ass tied, on which no man ever hath sitten: loose him, and bring him hither."¹

The morning was of such ideal beauty as only the spring sky of Palestine can produce. The azure of the far distant firmament was woven with the threads and beads of the golden sunlight, which melted away in the dome of heaven, not disappearing, but lending fresh luster to the atmosphere. The eastern horizon gleamed with a flood of the deep purple of the amethyst, resolving into a stream of emerald and opal as it ascended in the wake of the sun, and broadened out and glowed, a sea of golden fire, in the zenith. The light and soft air throbbed with the thrill of the glory reflected from the illumined empyrean. There was triumph in the heavens, triumph in the air, and triumph in the hearts of men.

The flowering shrubs, bushes, and trees were hung and strung with the myriad pearls of the dew sparkling and glittering everywhere and dropping in long strings, like chains of gold and gems, to the ground at the breath and touch of the morning zephyrs. The very songsters in the hillside groves were moved with a more joyful impulse to

¹ Luke, 19, 30.

elevate and prolong their sweet strains. The meditative cooing of the doves and turtles, the gay twitter of the swallows, the cheerful cry of the cuckoo, the hearty melodious canticle of the nightingales, the sprightly strains of the finches and thrushes, punctuated with the lusty, measured crow of the wild cock, and sustained by the rolling boom of the bittern from the neighboring rills and tarns, mingled in a paean of triumph softly sonorous. Nature was celebrating the glory of her Maker.

But the vigor and splendor of the adornment of nature had also taken possession of the hearts of the multitudes who had come out to Bethania and Bethphage from the Holy City to meet and greet the Son of David. Large troops of pilgrims who had on their arrival been acquainted with the astounding miracle of the raising of Eleazar, and who had brought rejoicing in their breasts from abroad, and the ardent desire to see the Greatest Prophet in Israel, had descended from Jerusalem in the company of other thousands of pious men, women, and children, and groups of envious Pharisees, to see Jesus, and Eleazar, "the man of death." On the way through the groves and parks of Mount Olivet, they had provided themselves with olive and palm branches with which to demonstrate the sentiments of joy and exultation that their breasts could not contain. They filled the highways to overflowing, a festive, merry throng, singing and shouting their Hosannahs and Halleluiahs to the meek and modest King.

Now they saw him approaching, seated on a colt, to accept their conduct to the royal city. They surged about him, expressing their admiration in word and gesture, hailing him as the Blessed of the Lord, dancing, and swinging their palm branches over their heads, or in sheer abandonment of exultation strewing the leaves and branches in the way, and even spreading their garments under the feet of the humble beast that bore their King. Steadily the en-

thusiasm grows, the faces are flushed, until with one accord the entire multitude breaks forth in the never failing shout of welcome: "Hosannah to our King! Blessed he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hail to the Son of David!" Sion was paying homage to her Messiah.

Like the roar of a mighty torrent rushing down the descent of Mount Olivet, the songs of the approaching procession resounded in the Holy City. Those at home turned toward the mountains in amazement, to behold an endless stream of humanity of all ages, clad in festive garbs, shaded by their lulaths,¹ rejoicing, singing, shouting, and dancing, and on the crest of the range the central figure of this extraordinary demonstration, the Man who had called forth Eleazar from eternity. "The Prophet of Nazareth," someone shouted through the street; and in an instant all Jerusalem was on its feet to go out and meet the peaceful army.

On the summit of the hills, in sight of the city and the Temple, streaming with light, a group of Pharisees angrily pressed about the Master, and threatened him:

"Command that these thy followers be still!"

But he replied earnestly:

"I say to you, that if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out."

And turning his eyes upon the city lying at his feet, his countenance changed, and was overcast with a deep shadow of sorrow; and he wept.

"If thou also," he complained, "hadst known, and that in this, thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."

¹Pleached branches.

And he tarried at that spot with his disciples, sorrowfully contemplating the city, the murderer of the prophets of God.

The enthusiastic groups that were endlessly passing by thought that his heart was welling over with joyful emotion at this triumph, and shouted still louder: "Hosannah to the Son of David! Peace and glory on high! Blessed the God of our Fathers, and blessed he that cometh in His name!"

Thus they conducted him to the city, and made its narrow streets groan with their masses, and tremble with their exultation, heading straightway toward the Temple. On the sides of the mount, on the summit of which the magnificent house of God was enthroned, and on both sides of the long stone stairs which led into the Beautiful Gate, the whole mass parted ranks, to let him ascend alone between them, they closing in after him, growing more quiet at every step for the reverence of the Holy Place, so that complete silence prevailed when he set his foot on the threshold of the porch.

But immediately at his entrance he began again, as he had done three years before, to cast out the merchants and the money-changers, and bade them take their wares thence: "It is written," he cried, "that my house is a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves!"

The people inwardly applauded him, and had it not been for the sanctity of the place, they would repeat their Hosannahs, and raise him on their shoulders, to proclaim him their King in the national sanctuary, in the very face of God. But they contented themselves with manifesting their sympathy with his holy zeal, by assisting the desecrators out of the court, with a more or less energetic application of their elbows and knees.

After the court had been cleared, and the people gathered about him, he again taught them the sweet doctrine of the Kingdom of heaven. The people listened with ravished

attention, until he sat down to dismiss them. But when he had ended his sermon, they all cried out again with one accord, repeating the words of the ancient prophecy:

“Hosannah! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David, that cometh! Hosannah in the highest!” And going out, they made room for the blind and lame, who were longing to be healed. But the rulers and the Scribes and Pharisees came up to forbid him “any further incitement to noise and irreverence.” The Master, however, healed all that had come, disregarding the grumbling of his adversaries, who were distracted with rage at his power and popularity and their own impotence in view of the sensitive populace.

In the evening, he returned quietly to Bethania to rest in the house of Martha, and to be comforted by the love of his friends — for the triumph of the day had goaded the hatred of Caiphas to madness, and signaled the Master’s impending consummation.¹

¹ Comp. Matt. 21; Mark, 11; Luke, 19; John, 22.



CHAPTER VI

A GLEAM OF LIGHT

NEITHER Miriam and her “little sisters,” nor Martha and Eleazar had gone up with the Master in his triumphal entry. It might seem strange that those nearest and dearest to him should have held aloof from the public demonstration made in his honor; but this retirement had been prompted by various circumstances. For one, they, above the rest of his intimate friends, had seen the shadows of death falling over him; Eleazar, the learned Rabbi, the man called out of the bosom of death, was too well versed in the scriptures of the prophets, and too sincerely devoted to the good Master, not to know that this triumph of one day was the prelude to his ultimate humiliation and rejection. He read to the little circle the passage of Isaiah:

“He was offered because it was his own will, and he opened not his mouth: he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth;”¹ and then the prophecy of Zachary: “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Sion; shout for joy, O Daughter of Jerusalem! Behold thy King will come to thee, the Just and Savior: he is poor and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass”;² and amid awestricken silence asked his listeners whether, if one of these Messianic prophecies was being fulfilled that day, the other would remain unaccomplished? And when he raised his head to survey the silent group about the table, he saw tears, hot and abundant, stream from Miriam’s eyes, Martha

¹ Isaiah, 53, 7.

² Zach. 9, 9.

with a kerchief over her face, Callidora bowed in silent, unspeakable terror, and Rhode with clenched fists, and eyes hot and fiery, but tearless.

Moreover, the Master had given them the assurance that he would return to them in the evening; hence, there was no evil to befall him that day. And lastly, the sight of Eleazar in a multitude on the verge of madness for joy, might precipitate the crisis; in fact, they had taken the Master in their midst, and borne him away in triumph ere his friends were wholly aware of what was about to happen.

They were not in a mood to join in the short-lived jubilations of these fickle children of Jerusalem; and had the women known that tidings had been brought in secret to Eleazar that Caiphas was also plotting against him, for that many Jews believed in Jesus on account of him, they would never even have signified a desire to witness his triumph from the summit of Mount Olivet.

During the day which Miriam and Martha beguiled with silent prayer, as soon as they had made the necessary preparations for the Master's reception in the evening, Rhode succeeded in luring Eleazar into a bower in the garden. She loved sunshine and flowers so well that the house, and were it the palace of a king, was a prison to her. In Gennesar she had often even eluded the watchful Rapha, and slept in the garden under the roses. He had found her one morning (and had reported it to the wondering mistress), lying flat on her back, wrapped from head to foot in one of Miriam's lamb's wool cloaks, on a carpet of fallen petals, with the nightingale singing her morning anthem overhead, and the "white barbarian" humming and crooning and singing in eager contest with the songstress.

Eleazar had often before noticed the intensely inquisitive eyes with which she studied his face, when she thought herself unobserved, and the curiosity with which she caught up every word from his lips. Often she would seat herself

directly at his feet on the occasion of reading the prophets, and gaze at him as steadily as he was gazing at the scroll before him. Sometimes the thought of what this strange mite may be thinking and feeling during the long hour of her silent meditation disconcerted him; for he could not help seeing, out of the corners of his eyes, the intent mien of the child take up and reflect, like the crystal surface of a spring, the images rising like sprites out of the holy pages. Her place then generally was a low divan, where she would put her elbows on her knees, and prop up her face with both hands under the chin, her wealth of yellow hair streaming about her, scarcely distinguishable from her white linen coat. She never wore sandals in the house, and Eleazar often caught her planting both feet upon his in forgetfulness; or was it — her childish roguery? But he never either remonstrated against or encouraged what he considered harmless pranks. She was too much a child, he thought, to appreciate the proprieties of domestic intercourse; yet it seemed strange to him that she was never guilty of an impropriety of conduct outside the house, never was insincere, never uncharitable, always most sensitive to cleanliness and propriety of speech and manner. It was only since last night, when she shook her finger at Judas, that he resolved to interest himself more in the strange white maid.

When she, therefore, after the Master's departure, came to him at the door of his room, where he was poring over the Scriptures, and beckoned him with her bright blue eyes, he willingly followed her. Once outside his room, where she would never enter unbidden, she made him her captive. Putting one arm about him, and taking hold of one of his hands, she led him away into the garden, to a bower of young olives, overgrown these latter weeks with vines of gourds and melons in full bloom. Here was a low stone bench, a small table, made of a slab of marble over a stone block, and a floor of slate around the table. No sooner had

he sat down, than she took her seat so close to him that she could lay her left arm around his neck. He was taken aback at such unsolicited friendliness, and attempted to enter a silent protest by moving away; but she held him tightly enough that he could not move away, if move he would, without her. He felt the pulse of her heart beating against his breast, loud and fast. Was she a child?

But Eleazar was neither suspicious of evil, nor conceited with his own uprightness, and he allowed her to have her will. A look into those innocent eyes convinced him at once that her present strange conduct was fully in harmony with her strange character. "What wouldest thou of me, little one," he asked gently; "art thou troubled?"

"I am not troubled, except that thou shouldst want to leave me."

"I will stay with thee as long as thou wilt; but thou hast taken me to this retreat for a purpose?"

"Ay, good Master mine," she answered reverently; "thou hast returned from the land of the dead — I will that thou do tell me of it."

Ah, this was the key to the inexplicable contradiction in her conduct! She held him as one hallowed by death, in whose behalf the restrictions of polite observances, manners, and ceremonies must be suspended. Or, mayhap, she had planted her naked feet upon his in order to assure herself that his flesh was the warm flesh of a living man, and not merely the transformed food of the grave! Eleazar smiled at the ingenuous conception; Rhode alone was capable of such fine and deep speculation.

When he did not answer for some time, she resumed:

"Hast thou seen the face of God? The Master saith: 'Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God'; thou art clean: hast thou seen God?"

"I have not, Rhode," he answered, without making an attempt to continue.

She eyed him with disappointment. "Is the world all dark and still beyond the grave?" she inquired again, intently gazing into his face.

Eleazar answered with a nod of his head, and remained silent and still, as if lost in thought. After a little while his lips parted, and he said in a scarcely audible voice: "The gates of Paradise are still closed; but they shall soon be re-opened; Hope as yet sits veiled at heaven's gate."

"I know," she rejoined, "that the heavenly Paradise is the Kingdom of the Messiah." Then she arose, and taking Eleazar's face into her hands, she bent forward, so that her face almost touched his, and said with great earnestness: "Eleazar, is there no other key for the jeweled gates but"—she hesitated as with unconquerable reluctance—"but—the Cross?" uttering the last word with a cry of pain. And Eleazar answered sadly with the words of the psalmist:

"‘The council of the malignant hath besieged me; they have dug my hands and feet, they have numbered all my bones. And they have looked and stared upon me, they parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture they cast lots.’—The Master himself has said: ‘They shall crucify the Son of Man; but the third day he shall rise again!’" Tears started up in the eyes of Eleazar as he pronounced these terrible words, and Rhode stood speechless, motionless, like one transfixed with the sudden terror of death. But in an instant the spell was broken; the first tears welled up in her eyes with such suddenness and force as to spurt into Eleazar's bosom, and presently she flung herself into his arms, weeping and sobbing disconsolately. But he gently raised her up, whereupon she dropped on her knees, and buried her face in her hands, weeping and moaning: "O dear Master mine, Good Shepherd Jesus!"

They did not see Omer, the silent, slink away from the bower, his fists clenched and his face livid with jealousy and rage.

When they returned to the house, Miriam instantly noticed the change in Rhode's manner and speech. The child had had a dark presentiment of the awful fate awaiting the Good Shepherd at the hands of the leaders, from the time that John had related to her the prophecy of the Master on the journey homeward from the Jordan; but she had not thought that the evil day was so near. Now, however, when she had heard the unmistakable witness of the Scripture, and when every face about her wore the fear and sorrow of the impending catastrophe, her vivacity was immersed in a sea of suffering indescribable. Her pure soul seemed to be a mirror upon which was clearly reflected that fearful scene of the "malignant council," besieging him, whom she loved so reverently, whom she loved for his sanctity and goodness, for his untiring labor among these stubborn people; of the "digging of his hands and feet" that have done no evil; of the "numbering of his bones"; of the staring and reviling mobs, of his garments becoming the spoils of the hangmen. "Does his mother know it?" she cried out to Miriam, without a warming introduction. But Miriam answered not; her heart grew hot with the love of the mother, who must see him die in ignominy, and yet would not be permitted to die with him. At the same time she conceived the reverence of a saint for the strange child who sympathized even now with the mother in anticipation of her woes. It was so womanly to think of her; yet Miriam had found no thought in her soul of the sorrowing mother beside him, upon whom all her love had centered; she had to learn from this "barbarian," who had room in her heart, it would seem, for everything good and pure, to consider also the quiet, loving woman who had borne *him* beneath her heart, and had loved him from his infancy with the most tender devotion.

In the evening of that day, when the Master returned to

Bethania, Judas was not among the Twelve. He was ashamed, he had said to one of them, to sit at the table of Miriam, whom he had so grievously offended at Simon's feast. He remained in the city. The Master was tired and foot-sore. Rhode had waited for him at the door, where, at the moment of his entrance, she knelt down and kissed his feet, and then loosened his sandals. Before he had sat down on a divan, she stood ready with laver and towel to do him the customary honor and kindness. Her heart was heavy, and many an involuntary sigh escaped her breast during her little service. The Master thanked her, and laid his hand upon her head in benediction ere he arose to enter the dining hall. She looked after him with her big, sad eyes, but did not follow him; she was not hungry.

After the repast, she sought John. He was in the garden, in the same arbor that had in the morning been the witness of her eruptive grief, and with him were Thomas and Andrew; a trio of sadness and fear. They were silent, each one sitting wrapped in his cloak, with eyes downcast, and sorrow and apprehension in every line of his face. At her approach, they looked up, and a faint smile of pleasure flitted over the darkened countenances. Rhode had endeared herself to everyone of the Twelve; she had often done the same service of love to them that she had to-day done the Master himself, except to Judas, "whom she would not touch even with a broom," she had once protested, when she passed him over, and left him to the kindness of a servant. Her ingenuousness had been her passport through everyone's heart, and the undimmed sunshine of her soul had often cheered their weary hours, when they had come hither to rest from the fatigue of their thankless labor.

But now even Rhode was sad. "You are all so gloom-beset," she began with an effort at her wonted cheerfulness, "as if you had been hired mourners to-day" (she did not

like the Jewish custom of “paying for sorrow”), “instead of participating in the royal honors of your Master; what evil hath befallen you? The Master hath not yet spoken of the end of his triumph, and I dare not ask him.”

But at the last words she sobbed anew, and her eyes grew dim; she could scarcely finish her words from emotion. Her cheerfulness was only a rainbow; the sun would not yet shine in full splendor. “Would it ever shine again!” she thought in despair.

Thomas, who had volunteered at the Jordan to come up and die with the Master, took pity on the grief of the child, and answered:

“If thou hadst heard the blasphemies hurled at the good Master’s head in the Temple, thou wouldest also know that he shall not again depart from these people alive. The chief rulers, who hate him, have contrived a plan to apprehend him, and those who love him, fear the Pharisees, so that no one defendeth him; and he will not go hence. ‘Father, save me from this hour,’ he prayed this day before the multitude; ‘but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name!’¹ And at that prayer there came a voice from heaven: ‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again!’ And the people who stood by heard it and said: ‘It thundered,’ and others: ‘Nay; but an angel spoke to him.’ It was the voice of the Lord of Hosts. But the Master thereupon said plainly: ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.’² He shall be ‘lifted up’—!³ He turned toward the high priest, when he said this terrible word, and Annas cursed him, and said that he would make away with him. Verily, I ween, Annas would have strangled him in the House of God, had not the people been about! When the people had left him, the bailiffs of the rulers surrounded him, and threw us aside; but the Master was nowhere to

¹ John, 12, 27–28.

² John, *ibid.*

³ The meaning of these words could not be mistaken. See John, 12, 34.

be seen. We met him at the Kidron, and have followed him hither."

Rhode returned to the house immediately. Meeting Martha at the door, she inquired where the Master might be, and being told that he had retired to the upper apartments to rest, she stood about a little while, until Martha had gone away, and then cautiously ascended the stairs. "I will beg him to hide himself, and go forth from his enemies," she said to herself; "in Gennesar, at the mansion of Magedan, we will make him a home fit for a King to enjoy." Her heart beat so loud that she pressed her hands upon it, lest it betray her presence before she knew whether she were welcome.

The door of the spacious room, which had been set aside for the Master's comfort, was wide open. At the opposite wall, which had large windows reaching from floor to ceiling, a soft couch had been placed; but it was unoccupied. Outside this room a balcony overrun with rioting vines and flowers extended the length of the wall. She stood at the door, and called softly: "Rabbi! Rabboni!" But she received no answer. He must be on the balcony, she thought, and presently turned toward another vacant room, and there went out. The Master was there, reclining against the hard stone wall for rest, seated on a low stool, asleep.

She stood still in reverent admiration of the noble figure. His long brown hair had fallen over the sides of his pale, beautiful face, his hands lay folded in his lap, his unsandaled feet were planted on the cement floor. It was late, the air was growing quite cool, and his feet were purplish red with the cold of the exposure and the stone flooring. She had not noticed this at first; her eyes were riveted on his calm, peaceful features, the countenance of a Victor, unconquerable, with the majesty of heaven lying over it like a filmy golden veil, to reveal enough of his origin to inspire love, and to conceal behind its glow the reality that would

strike terror into mortal breast. But when she had gazed at him to the full of her desire, she went into the room through which she had come out, and returning quickly with a lamb's fleece, she gently lifted up his feet and placed it under them. Then she knelt down at his side and rapturously raised her folded hands over her breast, silently gazing at him. She was enthralled with the vision of majesty in his countenance, which reflected in sweet harmony the unspeakable love of God and the brotherly compassion of a Man heroically forbearing the indifference of those who knew and received him not.

Thus wrapt in blissful meditation, she remained on her knees until the light of the rising moon fell full in his face, and awakened him. Rhode was happy. She never questioned what he might say when he would find her, the companion of his rest, upon awakening. She loved him; and what more natural than that he should love her in return?

She did not now feel sad, although she thought of his cruel doom; she had read from his peaceful face that his consummation was of his own choice. It was terrible, but it must be well, if he himself so chose it.

When the Master awoke and looked at her with his usual kindness, she did not arise and flee in confusion, but smiled at him blandly, and with heartfelt pleasure. But before she could give more sensible expression to her happiness, Simon-Cephas came stumbling out by the Master's room, and seeing her, blurted out angrily:

"Let him alone! Wilt thou rob him of his hour of rest? Away with thee!"

And he grasped at her arm to draw her away. But the Master intercepted Simon's hand, and said:

"Simon, did I not say to thee before this day: Let the little ones come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of heaven? If thou dost not become as one of these, thou shalt not enter therein."

Rhode fervently kissed his hand, and ran away, filled with joy and gladness. Had not the Master said that she belonged to his Kingdom? Then, was he not her King also?

Storming down the stairs she met Eleazar standing at the foot, looking up at her with a frown, and raising a finger in warning: "The Master sleepeth!" he said under his breath.

"Nay, nay," she replied joyfully; "the Master is wide awake and his Cephas is with him — for a scolding," she added, winking. "But Eleazar, I have seen the face of God — and I needed not die, to be disappointed!"

Then she took him by both his hands, and drawing him out on the lower balcony, related her experience, concluding with the prophecy: "He is as the rising sun, to run his course in splendor, and go down in blood, to rise anew: but his second glory shall never again go down!" And Eleazar added:

"Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; nor wilt thou give Thy Holy one to see corruption."¹

¹ Ps. 15, 10. (16, 10).



CHAPTER VII

THE VICTIM

EACH of the succeeding three days the Master went up to the city in the morning, and returned at even to rest in the midst of the loving friends who surrounded him in Martha's house. Each day he was obliged to decline a new device of cunning contrived for his destruction; his enemies had become rabid over his success. The people beleaguered his heels, and often held him for hours in one spot in the Temple. He taught them openly, in parables and in plain words, that he was come of the Father, the Savior of the world. The chief priests and the Scribes and ancients questioned his authority repeatedly; but when they refused to answer his question: "The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or from men?" he also refused to honor their hypocrisy by an answer that they themselves could give, but would accept neither from his lips. But instead of denouncing their malice before the people in direct terms, he told them the parable of the husbandmen in the vineyard, who, after having thrice insulted and cast out the King's servants, sent to receive the fruit of the vineyard, at last also cast out the beloved son of the King, saying: "This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours."

At this evident manifestation of the thoughts of their hearts, the chief priests sought to lay hands on him in the same hour; but they feared the people.

The next day, after a consultation with the deep Scribes, they tempted him with a dilemma, of which there was no declining: "Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Cæsar, or

no?" Let him say "Ay," and he is made a traitor to the Law; let him say "Nay," and he is made a traitor to the emperor: in either case he will fall into our hands.

But when they approached him standing in the thickest throng, and submitted their snare, he answered with cool dignity: "Why tempt you me? Show me a penny!" And when he received it, he held it aloft, and asked: "Whose image and inscription hath it?" They answering: "Cæsar's," he counseled them "to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," and with a look that pierced their false hearts, he added: "And render to God the things that are God's."

But when they left him, the Sadducees vexed him with subtle questioning concerning the resurrection of the dead; he answered them in such wise that their ignorance of the sense and spirit of the Scriptures became painfully apparent. The Scribes, who were at variance with the Sadducees, gloated over their defeat, and complimented the Master: "Master, thou hast said well!" And after that they themselves dared not ask him any more questions, nor turn upon him, when he said aloud to his disciples in the hearing of the people:

"Beware of the Scribes, who desire to walk in long robes, and love salutations in the market place, and the first seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; who devour the houses of widows, feigning long prayer. These shall receive greater damnation!"

He did no longer rebuke them as a teacher having authority; but he pronounced damnation upon their hypocrisy as their judge. It was a crushing blow that he struck at their reputation for religious zeal among the poor, whom they had so long been accustomed to rob, and oppress in the name of religion and country. He had challenged — and crushed them.¹ He had forced from one of their partisans the confession of the duty of brotherly love in words almost heretical

¹ See Luke, 20.

in those days of shallow observances: "To love one's neighbor as oneself, is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices."¹ How wicked must their relentless persecution of him appear in view of this beautiful commandment of God, enunciated by one of their own tribe before the face of the Son of David!

As a conclusion of the four days' labor, he foretold to his disciples the desecration of the sanctuary, the destruction of city and Temple, and his own glorious return upon the clouds of heaven to make judgment over the whole earth: "Watch ye, therefore," he concluded his intimate discourse, "for you know not when the lord of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest, coming on a sudden, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"²

If he was guilty of blasphemy, why did his enemies fear the people? Had the people lost the idea of criminality in blasphemy? And if he was innocent, as he must be, because the hand of God was visibly with him, why did they hate him even unto murder? "If we kill the Son of the King, the inheritance shall be ours": it was envy and jealousy, godless lust of power, that goaded the priests and the Pharisees to the murder of the Son of God.

On the fourth day after his solemn entry into the city, he tarried with his friends until well toward evening. His demeanor that entire day was marked by the joyful tranquillity of his face, and the supreme repose of all his movements and his speech. He wore the air of one going to battle with the assurance of victory. Late in the afternoon he set out with the Twelve from Bethphage, whither his friends of Bethania had given him conduct of honor and love.

The loving souls whom he left behind stood a long time in silence at the foot of Mount Olivet, keeping him

¹ Mark, 12, 33.

² Mark, 13, 35-37.

company with their eyes, until he disappeared in the shadow of the dense groves. Eleazar at last suggested to the women to return home; but his voice was so small from anguish of mind, that they rather guessed than understood his suggestion, and looked at him with fresh anxiety. He had borne up so bravely under the burden of his sorrow while the Master was with them; but now his strength seemed to be spent: Eleazar wept bitterly over the impending death of him who, amid his own tears of love, had called him forth from the abode of death.

The silent Omer, who had also gone up with the family to Bethphage, shook his head, and grumbled to himself; no one could divine his thoughts. He had not spoken ten words to any one, except, perhaps, to Rhode, with whom he had often been seen to quarrel, since his arrival at Bethania. It was his own secret, whether he was a follower of the Master, or not; for Rhode never spoke of her dumb admirer. It had been noticed, however, that Omer was as assiduous in dogging her steps as she was anxious to avoid him; but complain to anyone? that she would not! Omer's protestations of love, or whatever else might bind him to her heels, were generally only mute signals, and would not have been felt as an annoyance, but for their stubborn persistence. Even now he dropped behind the several groups of idlers, who had joined themselves out of curiosity to the small band from Bethania, and was edging nearer and nearer to the "white maid." But when she became aware of his maneuvers, she laid her hand in Miriam's arm, and clung to her; he respected his mistress sufficiently not to display his folly in her presence.

But Miriam also had seen him approach, stealthily and clumsily, and understood Rhode's impetuous intimacy at this solemn hour, when every heart that loved the Master was weighed down with grief. She laid her arm about Rhode's shoulders, thus giving her silent assurance of her

protection. Omer stood still by the side of the road when the twain passed, with a scowl on his face, and fell in behind them, stamping along in their footprints like a chastised hound.

Presently Martha and Callidora emerged from a group of women and children who separated here from the broken procession and followed a side road. Martha's prodigal good nature prompted her immediately to associate herself to the lone traveler, and to try to dispel the cloud of grief which she thought was the cause of his somber silence and dejection. She had so far not paid much attention to the Galilean husbandman of her sister: she had been too busy about the house to give thought to anything not pertaining to the comfort of her cherished guests. But Omer must have been a close observer of his surroundings; when Martha addressed him with the comforting assurance that "all would yet be well," he answered contrary to his habitual reticence: "Some things will never be well, unless one take the helm himself." His eyes flashed stealthily at Rhode, as he spoke, but she seemed not to have heard him, yet she knew that he was alluding to the failure of his ardent suit with her, and was launching a threat at her reserve. She knew his craft; but to everyone else he was the dolt, the coxcomb, or the Silent. A slight quiver ran through her body, and Miriam drew her more tightly to herself.

Martha, thinking that his veiled threat was an expression of his disappointment at the supposed remissness of the beloved Master which allowed the enthusiasm of the people to cool at the very foot of the throne of David, resolved to enlighten him, and replied:

"The Master doth as seemeth good for the glory of the Kingdom of God. If he will ascend a throne, the world is his empire!"

To the surprise of Miriam, his retort also to this mysterious word of her guileless sister was ready on his tongue:

"There are three thrones prepared for thieves, not yet erected, but lying in their places on the crest of Golgotha by the city. To-morrow they shall be set up for such as make themselves the betters of their fellows."

"What meanest, Omer?" Martha asked with a shudder at the fearful insinuation.

"What mean I?" — He paused for a moment like the archer, for accuracy of aim, and then added slowly, and with the sharp accent of hatred: "That three crosses are hewn, measured, and drilled for the nails, to accommodate in their ascent to Abraham's bosom three malefactors: Barabbas, the thief, Shemaiah, the traitor, and Gad Ben Hadassah, the 'king.' But one of these three will profit by the amnesty of the feast-day; there will be one tree left without its mock-rose, unless —"

Miriam uttered a shriek of pain and despair, and fell unconscious into the arms of Rhode and her brother.

Omer interrupted his ghastly description, which he had recited with malicious relish, and after a look of fiendish satisfaction at the agonizing Miriam, stepped aside and departed toward the Mount of Olives.

When they arrived at the gate of their estate, Martha and Callidora assisted Eleazar and Rhode in bearing Miriam into the house, where she was soon revived under the experienced care of her sister. Rhode's lips were quivering with excitement and suppressed weeping; anger, pain, fear, and impassioned threatening were strangely mingled in her face. She looked about for the brute who had so heartlessly accounted the dear Master among the thieves; but he had fled.

A little later, when Miriam had recovered, and was sitting alone in the hall, softly weeping, Rhode entered, and kneeling down at her feet poured out her troubled heart to her wondering, suffering mistress:

"Do not weep, dear — dear mother mine! We have

known these many days that the good Master's end is near. But I will tell thee why that wolf hath made that brutal threat: In Gennesar he had already laid his snares for me, and since we have come home he has not missed a day that he would not spread his nets before my feet. I have held my peace, and borne his insults to my maidenhood in patience. But last eve he accused me that he had seen me keep sweet converse with the Master — which I need not deny to thee — and threatened that he would steal me from my bed, and denounce the Prophet to the ancients, unless I fly with him. Two days ago he trysted with Judas; and I know that Judas has covenanted with the priests to betray the Master without rousing the people. I should have told thee; but the Master knew. Weep not, dear mother mine!"

And she was herself weeping without an effort at restraining her tears.

"O Rhode mine," Miriam sobbed; "if he be only spared the darkest dishonor of dying with the thieves! He is innocent and pure, a lamb among these beasts of prey; oh, could I die for him, I, who have deserved his death!"

"We all!" ejaculated Rhode with deep earnestness.

"I will go up to-morrow to comfort his mother," said Miriam; "she has not been with him to-day, and if aught befall him, how shall she bear it?"

"I shall not go up; let me retain the sweet memory of his lovely face without the stains of blood, and the blotches of bruising. But thou — rememberest thou the Rose in his hands? If thy heart be stouter than the rock — go up, and do him honor before his adversaries."

"He honored me, when I deserved no honor; let it be done — even if they nail me to the rear of his cross!"

But later in the afternoon, as she saw Eleazar making the ceremonial preparations for the eating of the Pasch, she remembered that the feast-days would begin with sun-

down, and that a journey after sabbath-break would be a profanation; therefore she communicated her resolve to her brother, in order to be guided by his advice. She broke forth again into sobbing so vehement that she could scarcely speak, when she laid before him her fear of the dreadful probability of the Master's consummation in the company of the evil-doers. Eleazar's own heart quailed at the cruel revelation; he had never thought of this grossest of all indignities threatening the good Master; but after some confusion over the terrible disgrace of him "who loved him," he replied with great discouragement: "And he was reputed with the wicked."¹

"Then it must be!" cried Miriam in agony; and taking her cloak, she departed for Jerusalem.

On the way across the desert of Judah, she overtook a woman, who was plodding along the same road, but slowly and heavily, as if fatigued unto exhaustion. Miriam was about to pass her, when the slim figure turned her head toward her, and she recognized her own "little sister" Callidora. "Calle mine!" she exclaimed, embracing her; "wilt thou be brave enough to see him die!"

But the maiden did not answer. Her sorrow was too great to venture out in words; it would break down all restraint; and she wanted so much to be brave. She raised her dark, brimming eyes to her companion, and silently continued her sad journey at her side. It was a thorny road that would end at the foot of the Tree of Shame.

They arrived at the city gates a little before closing time. Still, had they been belated, they knew that they could enter by the bridge-port of the Kidron, which was of so little importance, a mere "needle eye" in comparison with the larger gates, that it was never, or rarely, closed.

But whither turn now? The Master was celebrating the Pasch with his apostles; but where? After a hurried

¹ Is. 53, 12.

consultation, they decided to ascend the mount of the Temple, and lodge with the pious women in one of the cloisters until they should learn the place of the Master's retreat, if haply someone knew or spoke of it. At every step they were obliged to make way for someone hurrying up or down the ascent of the Porch of Solomon, priests, levites, messengers from the Temple, or, from the house of Annas, soldiers and loungers. There seemed to be a dismal shadow hovering about the Holy Place; the Roman soldiers had already mounted guard for the feast-days, and the sentinels with their clanking armor and gleaming spears were patrolling the parapet of the exterior wall. Confused noises of shouting and tramping rose over the fortress Antonia, and from the "Stables of Solomon"¹ where the newly arrived cohorts of Pilate were stabling their horses. Sion was not as tranquil as she was wont to be on the eve of the great paschal festivities.

Arriving at the cloister, the two strange visitors were received with kindly curiosity, and conducted into a large room, where fruit and bread were offered them for refreshment. They did not eat, and after a look at the quiet face of the maid who waited on them, Miriam knew that the inmates of this retreat were ignorant of the terrible tragedy that was in preparation at their door. But did anyone know in Jerusalem? she asked herself. Judas had been seen in conference with the Scribes and Pharisees, and once or twice he had been observed to emerge, thoughtful and nervous, from the house of the high priest, where Annas and Caiphas had called a council the day before; Omer had informed Rhode of these particulars. Yet it was very unlikely that they would apprehend the Master in public, and on the feast-day, when so many pilgrims from all the provinces between Syria and Idumea were at hand, friends of the Great Prophet from every corner of the land, and enthu-

¹ So called.

siasts from beyond the portion of Israel. Besides, the fickle inhabitants of the city had these last days taken it into their heads to honor him; they were wild with enthusiasm over his doctrine, and a *coup* of the leaders against him might provoke a tumult, and give Pilate an opportunity to furnish another proof of his hatred of the people and the hierarchy.

Miriam made these and similar observations in part to Callidora, and the conclusion to be drawn from them seemed so safe that she began already to resuscitate the hope of her soul: "He will live through these dangers without hurt." Even the presence of the governor and his doubtful warriors inspired her with new confidence. Pontius Pilate had a grudge of long standing against the leaders in Jerusalem; if they let him suspect that they delivered the Master up to him through envy and jealousy, he would set him free to be revenged on them; and they themselves had power to crucify him neither by their own religious law nor by the criminal law of Rome. It was forbidden to them to hang one of their own nation on the accursed tree, lest he be also accursed; they might stone him: but even before they could execute this sentence, it must be submitted to the pretor to be ratified. But, behind all these fleeting, shifting clouds, that were made bright with specks and sparks of hope, or at least did not threaten with the dark ignominy of the cross, the Good Shepherd himself raised his head with the unalterable decree on his lips: "I give my life for my sheep." Had he not himself chosen this hour? "I, when I be *lifted up*, will draw all men unto myself." The great Shepherd, stricken down and bruised, with the world at his feet, as she had seen him in her dream after the beheading of the Baptist, was but the reflection of the pious meditation and study of her spotless girlhood on the bosom of her learned brother. "My beloved is white and ruddy,"¹ she murmured, "chosen out

¹ Canticle of Solomon.

of thousands: O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow! Flee away, O my beloved, and be like to the roe, and to the young hart upon the mountains of aromatical spices!¹ — I have spread forth my hands all the day to an unbelieving people, who walk in a way that is not good after their own thoughts: and I will set a sign among them, and I will send of them that shall be saved, to the Gentiles into the sea, into Africa and Lydia them that draw the bow: into Italy and Greece, to the islands afar off, to them that have not heard of me, and have not seen my glory, and they shall declare my glory to the Gentiles — and all flesh shall come to adore before my face.”² He could avoid their snares even now, as he had so often before eluded their power; but if he shaped the course of coming events unto his own consummation despite the legal difficulties that shielded him in these days, then “he was offered, because it was his own will.”

After the first vigil of the night, a maid entered the lonely room and asked them whether they would remain there all night; if they intended to leave, the gates would now be closed. The women arose with a sigh, and thanking her for the charity of the shelter, departed, and turned in the direction of Annas’s house. On the way they met — Judas! He was tightly wrapped in his cloak, but a stout bag of money protruded from its folds, clutched in his right hand together with a lantern. His face was twitching with a satanic grin. Miriam at first was so frightened at his appearance that she let him pass by; but her anxiety about the Master overpowered her fright, and she ran after him and stopped him.

“Judas, son of Simon,” she pleaded, “tell me where I may find the Master!”

Callidora stood a few paces apart from them, trembling

¹ Canticle of Solomon.

² Various quotations from the Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah.

with fear. Judas turned upon his questioner with a snarl as savage as that of an envious cur, and replied:

"Go to, and let me alone!" But when he scrutinized the sorrowful face in the light of his lantern, and recognized her, he growled:

"Spendthrift! Go now, and look to his anointing!"

And he turned away in the road toward the barracks of the soldiers.

As they came nearer the house of Annas, they saw that a great crowd of men and half-grown youths, armed with cudgels and staves, were gathered about it, running hither and thither, and talking loud and excitedly together, and brandishing their coarse weapons over their heads. It was dangerous for two women, Miriam said, to venture near enough to be known as women; hence they retraced their steps, and proceeded in sheer despair, amid the dreary stillness of the narrow streets, toward the port opening on the lower bridge of the Kidron, near the tomb of Absalom,¹ to seek shelter among the dead. It would render them unclean for the morrow's participation in the sacrifices; but what cared they? To-morrow may be offered a sacrifice for the cleansing of the unclean, and for the washing away of the sins of haughty Sion!

It was a long and dark way, and the fear of the night so unnerved them that not long after they had bestowed themselves together in the roofed entrance of a tomb, they fell asleep. The dead were less hostile to the friends of the Master than the living might prove to be if they should detect the two lone women hidden in some gate or garden.

It must have been well after midnight when they were disturbed in their slumber by a noisy crowd passing over the upper bridge, carrying torches, lanterns, and clubs, in the midst of whom gleamed the spears and coats-of-mail of soldiers. They must be the crowd whom they had seen

¹ So called.

at the house of Annas late in the evening. But what could the presence of the soldiers mean? Ah, the temple guard! The chief priests had pressed them into service for this special occasion. Miriam and her frail companion were affrighted; they divined the object of this expedition into the night: the Master was in the habit of spending whole nights in prayer in Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives. His retreat had been betrayed, and they were now leading him to prison: the tragedy was begun.

On a sudden inspiration, Miriam set out on an inspecting tour along the bank of the brook upwards, picking her way among the bushes and clusters of shrubbery to the top of Golgotha. There, Omer had said, three crosses lay prepared for the most inhuman mode of execution, as practised under Roman law; she must learn whether he had told the truth. It was a difficult way in the night, but she would brave any danger in order to convince herself that the dastard had lied; they would not prepare a new cross on the Sabbath day, and no one would be found to carry it out that day.

But when she came to the place where three holes, surrounded by heaps of fresh earth, were dug in the stony ground, she also found three crosses, joined and bored according to the bodily dimensions of their respective victims. The Romans were very exact, and their expeditiousness did not detract from their circumspection. In the counting of one's fingers they would throw their victim down, and drive the nails through his hands and feet, as coolly as if they nailed an owl to the door of a barn. In every instance, without exception, the wretched culprit would already be "prepared" by the infliction of the indescribably cruel Roman scourging,¹ and the offering of a generous potion of sour wine mixed with myrrh, which rendered the victim unconscious long enough not to give the executioners much trouble during the awful procedure of

¹ PRAEPARATIO AD CRUCEM: "Preparation for the cross."

nailing him fast; when he would come out of his stupor, he was beyond human help, and beyond the use of the means of effective protest. The executioners would answer his cries of pain and his pitiful pleadings with the encouragement to "be cheerful," to "appreciate the high place to which they had lifted him," to "see the glory of the world pass before him — and pass with it," and with other jibes as heartless as they were unprofitable. But they themselves would idle away their time, squatting under the eyes of the dying man, by playing dice, and cursing at each other. Often the naked man overhead could see how they wrangled over his garments, not agreeing as to which portions should be set on the next die: it was an awful death which approached slowly, menacingly; leisurely spreading all its terrors before the eyes of its victim, and strangling him with thin, tight cords.

When Miriam saw the crosses, every incident connected with the crucifixions of which she had ever heard — she had never witnessed one — stood before her sight. The depths of her soul revolted against the thought that the Master should be subjected to this torture and disgrace. "What a disgrace must sin be in the sight of the Father in heaven," she exclaimed, beside herself with grief, "if such is its ransom!"

Callidora had, at sight of the instruments of inhuman cruelty, buried her head in the bosom of Miriam, shivering and trembling. Where was her father? His name had not been mentioned with the condemned; but rumor had reached her that he was in prison. Poor child! It is well, that thou dost not know the truth.

They crouched down in a clump of vines, wet with the heavy dew. Why should they now return to the city? If the Master was in the hands of the leaders, they could offer no assistance; they would wait until the break of day. Callidora, who was much frailer of build, and had much less aggression than her passionate companion, succumbed to

the terrors of her apprehensions, and at last yielded to the insufferable demands of nature. Hunger and thirst were asking their just tribute with such insistent vehemence that she plucked the half-ripe berries to eat and shook the dew from the large leaves of the vines to moisten her lips, and drank it greedily. They had not tasted food or drink since noon of the preceding day; but Miriam did not feel the necessity of ministering to the wants of the body, when her soul was so full of anguish.

At the rising of the sun they returned to the city. They were struck dumb with dismay at the change which had taken place during the night. This was a feast-day, the Preparation for the Great Sabbath in the paschal week, a day of rest and prayer — and the whole city was in an uproar, excited men, weeping women and children hurrying through the streets, and a large stream of the population madly rushing toward the palace of Herod the Great, the headquarters of the governor. Was it the sad fate of the deluded Ben Hadassah, or the just meed of wage of She-maiyah, that attracted the curious populace? What was a crucifixion in these days of pagan domination to the inhabitants of Jerusalem! The hills about the city were studded with the ghastly monuments of Roman justice, in so far as the practical youth had not taken them down and chopped them into kindling wood.

Miriam's feet became heavy, and her breath began to fail; Callidora fell down in the road. Some compassionate woman raised her up, and conducted her to a neighboring house. They knew well why all Jerusalem was on its feet: the Man of the day, the Prophet, stood before the pretor.

Miriam was carried away by the eager throng, into the court of Pilate, who was seated in the Gabatha, the place from which final sentence was pronounced. At the moment when she came within reach of his voice, she saw his face light up with sudden wrathful scorn, and she heard him

cry to the people: "Shall I crucify your King?" And to her horror the maddened crowds shouted back at him: "We have no King but Cæsar!" They accepted the yoke of Rome rather than bow to the humble "King of the Jews!" Then Pilate washed his hands, after the manner of his subjects, and cried over their heads: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man." But the rabble in the leash of their elders and priests replied with insane contumely: "His blood be upon us, and upon our children."

Miriam still hoped against hope that Ben Hadassah, the visionary, might be the victim of this bloodthirsty cry; but when the guard at Pilate's seat stepped aside, her own beloved Master stood there, bound, covered with blood, bruised, with a mock crown of thorns on his head, and his shoulders covered with an old military cloak. She did not faint; because at that moment a woman threw her arms about her, and sobbed most piteously on her bosom. It was HIS Mother. At sight of her unspeakable woe, Miriam conquered her own sorrow to comfort the sorrowing mother.

Now they stripped him of the cloak, and vested him with his own garments, and leading him down the steps of the judgment seat, they laid a heavy cross upon his bruised shoulders. The crowds turned away, heading for the nearest gate, shouting insults, and reviling him, calling to each other in derision: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews!" But the leaders and the Pharisees, who were scattered among them, forbade them: "Do not say: The King of the Jews; but, the impostor, the pretender, for we have no King but Cæsar." The new cry, issued by the leaders, however, found little favor: the men shouted as lustily as the boys: "The King of the Jews!"

Outside the court, the soldiers threw the multitude aside, and formed the procession. At the head was placed the official crier; he bore a tablet in his hands, on which was written, according to custom, the "cause" of the condemned

man: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," in the three languages in use in Jerusalem, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. When Caiphas saw it, he sent a messenger up to Pilate, to correct it to read: "*He made himself* the King of the Jews." But Pilate sent the boy back to the high priest with the angry retort: "What I have written, remains."

On the way to Golgotha, Miriam heard the history of his condemnation told with painful circumstance and cruel relish. The narrators unconsciously insisted upon the intimidation of the governor by Annas and Caiphas as the last reason for his sentence. "But he is an innovator against the Law and the Temple" — how well they must have been coached! "He spoke against the City and the Sanctuary; he trampled upon the doctrine of the Pharisees," and many more accusations they alleged, to suppress the remonstrances of their conscience.

His cross was heavy. Barabbas, the rebel and thief, had been liberated in his place; but Barabbas was short of stature, and so coarse-framed that the nails intended for him would have torn asunder the slender hands and feet of the Master. Hence, in order to avoid delay at the place of execution, the soldiers themselves had prepared a new cross; and because neither soldier nor Jew would bear the cross, the sign of disgrace for the one, and of the curse of God for the other, he was obliged to carry his own cross: contrary to the Sabbath law, but in accord with the hatred of Annas and Caiphas, the deluded populace abetting the flagrant violation of a law, for the alleged disrespect of which they were leading the Prophet to his death.

But there were many men and women who looked on these proceedings with a clearer understanding than the unthinking and misguided rabble; their faces were pale with the fear of the anger of the Most High, and with pity for the unfortunate victim of the unmeasured hatred of the leaders. The women wept over him, the men turned away

their faces, when he was about to pass them, groaning, and panting for breath, under the heavy burden of his cross. It was insult added to injury, and cruelty to injustice, to lay the cross on his shoulders after they had beaten the flesh from his bones, and wounded his head with the crown of thorns, which he was still wearing. Ben Hadassah and Shemaiah, his companions in disgrace, had also been scourged; but their face and head and chest had been spared from the lashes. They walked slowly, dragging themselves reluctantly, or rather, being dragged by the hangmen; but they had not lost so much blood, and with it, so much energy. Besides, although a bloody gate, yet a gate was the cross to them, a deliverance from the living death of the prison cell. He had been ravished from the height of life's course, in the bloom of manhood, out of the midst of his activity, and since midnight not only had not been allowed a short spell of rest, but had been in the hands of the barbarous hordes, who respected neither sentiment nor sense, and had been bribed by the leaders to employ their bestial ferocity to their hearts' content against him. And they had done so well that even the Roman soldier Pontius Pilate, accustomed though he was to the cruelties of Roman warfare against barbarous nations who were slaughtered like cattle, had quaked at the sight of his prisoner, when the executioners had brought him up from the flagellation, and had exclaimed with horror: "*Ecce Homo!*" "What a man!"

The lamenting and weeping of the women swelled as he passed through the ashen-faced, trembling crowds. But he, who tottered by with a trail of blood on his tracks; who seemed every moment about to break down under his burden, addressed them with a voice, if compassionate, yet as clear and strong as they had often heard in the Temple pour from his throat: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days shall come, wherein they will say: Blessed are the

barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us, and to the hills: Cover us! For if in the green wood such things are done, what shall be done in the dry?"

The chief priests Annas and Caiphas, and a committee of the Sanhedrin, the official procurators of his cause, and some Pharisees, among whom was also Simon of Capernaum, stalked boastingly ahead of their victim. When he spoke to the women, they first turned their heads with wonder at the strength and calmness of his voice, and then blinked at each other with an expression that betrayed as much insecurity and anxiety as scorn and obstinacy.

In the meanwhile one of the principal actors of this revolting drama finished his role, and stepped off the stage forever.

Rapha had heard of the triumphant entry of the Prophet, in whom he had only believed with the reserve of his Judean pride, but whom he now was willing to accept, if all Jerusalem accepted him, and had resolved to come up to the city to honor him. The threatening dangers of Gennesar had disappeared with the marauders, who had, in the first days of the festal week, gone into Judea; some, attracted by the purses of the pilgrims, others, incited by their curiosity to witness the fate of the Galilean Prophet in the hands of the Judean rulers. For they had little faith in his lasting triumph among the intriguers of Jerusalem, who had sacrificed even the honor of the high priest's office to their greed and ambition.

Rapha had arrived that morning. He had come by the way of Bethania to inquire after the welfare of his "dove," and when he learnt that she had gone up to the city with Miriam, he made haste to seek them. Upon entering the city, the tumultuous crowds streaming northward through the Gate of Herod attracted his attention, and he set out to

pursue them. But when he came near the pretorium, he espied a young woman, sitting on a stone bench at the side of a house, weeping and wringing her hands. He pitied her grief, and wondered that she should sit alone in the street with such signs of suffering upon her. He drew near, and recognized his own Callidora.

"They are leading him forth to the crucifixion!" she cried out passionately, and arose to follow in the tracks of the mob. But Rapha dissuaded her:

"Thou art not of the people," he said; "if they recognize in thee a stranger and a follower of him, they may do thee harm; I would rather lead thee to the Temple."

Arriving in the Court of the Gentiles, they beheld a group of priests and officials in a wrangle with Judas, who held up to them a stout purse and berated them, because they withdrew their hands from it, burying them in their coats. "Take it back," he shouted aloud at last; "Take it back, and set him free; I have sinned betraying innocent blood!" But they laughed at him, and turned their backs upon him. Then Judas threw the pouch down on the pavement, with such vehemence that its strings broke, and the silver shekels rolled and clinked merrily over the stones. With a curse he crushed the purse under his heel, and angrily stamped away.

Rapha made a step or two forward to run after him, but the maiden held him back by the coat. "Leave me not alone, Rapha," she pleaded; "but lead me out to the place of the Master's consummation! I am not afraid, if thou keep thy hand over me." And Rapha, rejoicing in his heart at this first appeal of her timidity to his protection, gladly acceded to her wish. They proceeded very slowly, Rapha for indifference and leisure, and the maiden on account of her frailty and fatigue.

As soon as they passed out of the Gate of Herod, the

three crosses appeared in dismal outline against the threatening sky. The faces of the crosses were turned away from the Holy City, so that they could see nothing of the grawsome fruits of the trees of infamy, except a white cloth or veil fluttering from the middle cross. Rapha was becoming depressed; he remarked to his gentle companion, that the aspect of the heavens was most unusual for the season. He directed Callidora's attention to the sun, only half-way on its course to the zenith, at this time always in its full morning splendor, and now pale and dull, without the radiance of its golden beams. The sky in the East was turning to a yellowish gray, like in the days when the red sand of the desert chokes the air; but there was not a breath of wind. The leaves about them drooped listless, the grass and shrubs stood still and stiff, as if they were made of strips of metal. There seemed to be an intense expectancy and a dire dread poured out upon them. And the darkness and shadows in the sky grew apace; suddenly a bright flash of lightning shot across the somber sky, lighting up the distant darkened hills of Samaria, and the frowning forests of the ridge of Jericho, as with a torch flung across a dark abyss. The spectators stood in eager expectation of the answer of heaven; but heaven remained silent, and the darkness fell fast and thick.

The people fled towards the city, only a few here and there remaining with the soldiers and the leaders. Rapha proposed to join the fleeing masses, but Callidora silently pressed forward, her eyes steadily fixed on the middle cross on the top of the mount.

The scene about that cross was a revelation of human perverseness to the hardened husbandman from Gennesar and conceited Judean. The priests, the Scribes, and the Pharisees in accord with the rude executioners surrounded it, passed around it, and struck the palms of their hands against it, reviling the patient sufferer, and inviting him

tauntingly to descend, if he be the Son of God. Presently Simon of Capernaum swaggered up, and turning up his nose, struck his palm derisively against the cross of the friend of the publicans and sinners, and sneered: "Vah—!" But at the same instant, Ben Hadassah turned his eyes toward Jesus and begged earnestly and with a voice full of faith and trust: "Lord, remember me, when thou enterest into Thy Kingdom!"

It was not the words and their absolute confidence of obtaining salvation from a dying man, but the sound of the voice, that stifled the blasphemous "Vah" of the Pharisee. He stood speechless for a moment, and then fell heavily to the ground: he had recognized the voice of his son. "Simon Bar Jehu, the Galilean," Caiphas explained, and gave orders to remove the stricken father, while the answer from the lips of the dying King rang clear upon the ears of the scoffers: "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

Upon these words, Shemaiah, who hung to the left of Jesus, upbraided him bitterly, saying: "If thou be the Son of God, help thyself, and us. Descend, Son of David; the accursed wood is a poorly appointed throne for the King of the Jews!" It was only a repetition of his oft confessed despair, and Jesus made him no answer.

The mother of Jesus, with Miriam at her side, and other women who had followed him from Galilee, were standing outside the ring of the soldiers. These were stationed as guards to watch the execution, and to prevent disorder. They were of the regular Roman legions, sturdy and honest, while the executioners were barbarian captives pressed into military service for the chief purpose of detaining them from stirring up rebellion in their own countries, and of assisting the legionaries at such tasks as the Roman thought beneath his honor to perform in person. The legionaries were stern-visaged men, accustomed to rigid discipline; the mercenaries

were best trained to order and decency by the free application of the *fasces*¹ and ax.

The soldiers, under the leadership of the *exactor mortis*, a centurion, were visibly moved at the unheard of spectacle of one dying man imploring living companionship of another, and of one promising the other a place in a realm to be conquered and won in death. But when towards noon the darkness had grown so intense that they could not see the fourth or fifth man in the line, and when amid the terrible silence the "King of the Jews" exclaimed: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me!" the sturdiest among them winced with the fear and oppression of the supernatural. Then the earth trembled and quaked, and under their feet the rocks were rent, and they leaned heavily upon their spears to keep from falling upon each other. And to increase the horror of the darkness, forms in grave clothes were seen flitting by, and about his cross, so that the women shrieked with fear. The Romans were startled and dismayed at sight of these apparitions. At the same time, a great shout of alarm rose out of the Temple, and the tumult of the precipitate flight of those who had gone up for the sacrifices resounded from the courts, the terraces and approaches of the Holy House. Those who had fled from the cross of their crucified King, whose title was nailed fast over his head, were heard returning amid a confusion of terrified prayers and penitential pleadings for mercy from heaven. As the first arrived, they brought news, gasped out from laboring breasts, that the great veil before the Holiest of Holy was rent in twain from top to bottom, and was parted wide, and that voices of angels had been heard crying woe over the nation and the Temple. But those who had remained at the crucifixion were so filled with fear at what they had already witnessed, that the lamentations of their frightened brethren found no echo in their breasts.

¹ A bundle of rods.

Now the pall was lifting from the country round, and in a few moments the pale face of the sun hung overhead, cold and bald, and the King raised his drooping head, and cried aloud, with the clear ring of victory in his voice: "It is consummated: Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!"

Then he bowed his head; the pallor of death overspread his face, the blood slowly ceased to trickle from his thousand wounds, and a convulsive tremor ran through the pitifully lacerated form: Judah's King was dead.

The soldiers with their captain were amazed at the powerful cry from one in the throes of death: it reechoed distinctly from the walls of the city that had cast him forth.

"Verily," they cried out, "this was a just man; he was the Son of God!" And they gathered about his cross, looking up at him with reverence, and repeating with awe: "This was the Son of God!"

The rocks about them were riven, the earth was thrown out of the deep clefts, all nature was disturbed; they were disconcerted, and gathered in groups, discussing the terrible event with great agitation. The access to the cross was free: none could harm or help Him any longer.

Many of those who had remained through the terrible progress of the death scene, men and women, and of those who had returned from the profaned Temple, now moved away, striking their breasts, and bearing loud witness to the injustice of His taking-away. But His friends, a handful of stout-hearted and devoted women, and John, the well-beloved of His disciples, eagerly crowded about the cross, under the eyes of the centurion, who gazed at the kingly face upon the gibbet with a veneration akin to none that he had ever felt at the religious festivals of his Roman deities.

Miriam, whose heart was as full of sorrow and passionate grief as her eyes were full of bitter tears, fell on her knees at the foot of His cross, and embracing His feet kissed them with inexpressible affection. The upper part of her cloak,

which she had drawn over her head, fell back, and she knelt, clinging to the feet of her Master, unconcerned about the admiration of the bystanders; she wore no veil over her hair — and many a face reverently looked up from her bared head to His cross, where her veil was fluttering from the gory tree, the witness of her delicate devotion to the outraged modesty of her Savior.

Whilst Miriam was pouring out her grief in speechless sobbing, Rhode came hurrying from the garden of Joseph of Arimathæa at the foot of Golgotha, and after her, in hot pursuit, Omer. The latter, however, was intercepted by a bent and bowed old man half-way up the slope, and halted in his tracks to free himself from the iron embrace of his rude assailant, who held him to his breast in mock affection, lavishing on him the sweetest terms of endearment. Strong and burly as was Omer, his strength and bulk did not avail against the grip of such ravingly protested friendship. They tumbled about, fell, and rose again in a struggle, in which impotent fury reared against grinning madness. The haggard old man evidently intended to drag his victim up the slope to the place of the crucifixion.

Rhode was out of breath, when she reached the group of mourners; her face was pale with fear; but after a frightened look backward at her arrested pursuer, and another into the face of the dear Master, she sank down at the side of Miriam, weeping convulsively. But the paroxysm of grief soon gave way to a composure solemn and supreme in the lines of her beautiful, sad face. She arose, and throwing back the hood of her cloak, unwound her white linen veil, which was filled in the folds about her neck and throat with fresh, fragrant red and white roses. As she spread out the veil over Miriam's head and shoulders, they could be seen clinging with their tiny thorns and slender stems in the fine meshes of the material. Then she raised her hands and eyes aloft to the Master, and said as in prayer: "Good

Master, Thou art not departed from us forever; behold here those who have need of Thee, to be gathered together, Thy sheep," and her voice breaking with emotion, she added: "And one of the strange nurslings whom Thou didst shelter in Thy arms." Then she knelt again at Miriam's side, in silent prayer and weeping.

Rapha, who was holding Callidora's hand, reached over, and plucked a white rose from the veil, which he placed in her hand, saying: "I brought these flowers from Gennesar for a bridal gift to thee; but they are even thus well bestowed." His voice was so grave that Callidora timidly looked up at his face, to find his eyes brimming with tears. Quietly she accepted the tender gift, and bent her face over it for a moment; then she hid this delicate tribute of his devotion in the folds of her bosom.

The soldiers of the guard, and even the half-drunken executioners, looked on with amazement; such tenderness of devotion, such harmony of souls in purest affection, was a revelation to them. Did the influence of this Man's teaching and example penetrate into the deepest spring-heads of human affection? They were so devoted to Him: was this the cause of their unselfish devotion to each other?

Now the two combatants had reached the summit of the hill, Omer hanging limp in the arms of his captor, who proceeded to the cross of Gad Ben Hadassah, looking up into the face of the unconscious youth with the silly grin of a maniac, and shouting up, as he tightened his arms firmly about the neck of his prey: "Gaddiel, thou art not my son; this is my son: Gaddiel, the flower of Esther, my beloved." When he opened his arms, and threw them about the cross with a sudden burst of passionate grief, Omer's body fell at his feet: he had strangled him to death.

"It is his father," the centurion remarked briefly to the hangman who would drive the unfortunate maniac from the cross; "let him alone; his sorrow has driven out his sense."

By this time a messenger arrived in the person of Joseph of Arimathæa, bearing an order from the governor that the bodies should be removed, and the body of Jesus should be given over to himself for burial. The hangmen, seeing that there was still the breath of life in the two criminals at the right and left, placed a ladder against the cross of She-maiah first, and one ascending broke the legs with a heavy cudgel; then they performed the same mercy on Ben Hadassah. When they came to Jesus, however, and found Him already dead, the centurion raised his spear, and pierced His right side unto the heart. A stream of blood mixed with water gushed forth, and running down the blood-stained tree fell on the head of the prostrate Miriam. She arose — and instantly the maniac, as if recognizing in her the wife of his youth, exclaimed pathetically: “Thou art beautiful, my beloved one, as the roses of the hills of Gen-nesar. Come to me; I will give thee back the delight of thy eyes, thy son Gaddiel —”; his face fell, and recollecting the cruel incident of his recognizing his son’s voice, he added solemnly: “His soul is even now at rest in paradise, in the bosom of the Prophet.”

At the same moment, the bruised body of his son fell heavily at his feet: Simon uttered a shriek of despair, and plunged forward, dead, upon the body of Hadassah’s child, whom he had laden with his merciless curse.



CHAPTER VIII

THE VICTOR

IN the evening of that fated day, when the women had gathered about the Mother of the dead Master in the Cenacle,¹ and the night was already far advanced amid their sorrowful converse, a timid knock resounded on the door. Rhode answered it, and faced Simon Bar Jonah, the "Rock," who presented a sorrowful appearance. His eyes were reddened from weeping, which did not even then cease. The hood of his cloak he had drawn down over his brow, and his mouth and chin he kept covered with part of his cloak; he was the very impersonation of dejection. But once inside the door, he rushed to the Mother of them all, and cast himself at her feet, lamenting aloud his cowardice and wickedness: "I should have died with Him," he wailed, "and I did deny and desert Him! And now He has died, that I should not crave His forgiveness!"

Simon had protested against the accusation that he was His disciple, and had sworn that he did not know "the man"; he had not even had so much courage as to call Him Prophet or Rabbi.

While he was making his confession to the Mother, three or four more of the frightened apostles begged to be admitted, equally as disconsolate as Simon; and near midnight the last five begged admission. Judas did not appear; but when Thomas alluded to the absence of the "Traitor" in the most threatening terms despite his own guilt, Rhode remarked that she had seen him in the morning hanging

¹The Hall of the Last Supper.

by the neck to the limb of a sycamore near the upper bridge of the Kidron, where he had led out the soldiers to Gethsemane the night before on his errand of treason. Simon shuddered at the recital of the Keriothite's fate. Had not the Master said at the Last Supper: "Father, of these whom Thou hast given me, I have lost none, but the son of perdition?" And Simon crouched more closely to the feet of the Master's Mother.

The Eleven were ashamed of each other. They had so earnestly protested their fidelity to the Master in the night of his capture, and above all, Simon, who had taken a sword into the garden, and had made very impetuous use of it in the first confusion of the attack upon Jesus, that they could not now account for their subsequent — timidity? No — cowardice. Had they lost faith in the Master, and the Master's cause? Nay; they had never wavered in their faith: but it seemed so unspeakably cruel to be drawn into His frightful doom. Man is so much the toy of the hour, that he allows his sense to be overwhelmed by an unforeseen onslaught of his passions. They had forgotten the glorious prophecy that "on the third day He shall rise again."

But did not also Miriam weep, the brave, the devoted, the courageous, who had followed Him all the cruel way from the pretorium to Golgotha? And had not even the breast of Mary, His Mother, who certainly never doubted or forgot His word, heaved unto bursting with her bitter sobbing under His cross? Yea — but she loved Him beyond compare; and how could she sun herself in the anticipation of His triumph, when He was still wrapped in the bloody cloud of contumely and excruciating suffering? The heart of man is made for compassion; her sorrow flowed from a bleeding heart; but that of at least ten of His chosen apostles — for John had stood by Him under the cross — flowed from that abject fear which is neither compassion nor sorrow, but unprofitable selfishness.

The Master had been laid to rest in the tomb of a stranger. The sun had gone down, without leaving an even-glow in the chill and dark sky, and without giving promise of another rising. His Mother alone bore her sorrow nobly; not with the hopeless resignation of His disciples, nor yet with the petulant grieving of Miriam, which suffered not the thought of final separation, nor relented with the hope of a reunion, but simply pored over the painful scene of the crucifixion, and impotently protested against its reality. In Mary's face, now that the ordeal was over, of which she had stood in dread all her life since Simeon¹ had driven the sword of his prophecy through her soul, there appeared the faint glow of a glorious morning's dawn: as the highest peaks first reflect the rays of the golden light, and herald the new reign of the glorious King of day.

The next day was the Great Sabbath of the paschal feast-days; the good women burned with the desire to go out, to see His tomb, and to do Him the service of their love and homage in making up for the hurry of His entombing at the late hour yesterday. But the Law forbade everything that savored of labor or exertion. They went up to the Temple, where but two days ago He had stood before priests and people, proclaiming the advent of the Kingdom of God, whose King He Himself would be, and now death had already ravished Him from the land of the living! "Who believeth in me," He had said, "even if he be dead, shall live, and I will raise him up in the last day." And now He Himself had been swallowed up in death!

This theme was on the lips of all Jerusalem. Caiphas gloated over His defeat; Annas's face was a very calendar of triumph; and the others of the tops of zeal and piety in Sion, who had also been instrumental in procuring the swift consummation of the hated "usurper" of their power, were stalking about broadly, and made a loud show of their satis-

¹ At the Presentation.

faction over their victory before the still frightened worshipers, who were come to view the irreparable rent in the great curtain of the Sanctuary.

But the people were not as easily reassured as the leaders. They did not accept unreservedly the explanation given by the priests, that the tearing of that strong gold cloth was due to the earthquake; it was rent entwain from top to bottom, and yet the walls of the Sanctuary were not damaged. Why were they not thrown apart, when the wings of the torn screen were flung open? And were the voices crying woe over City and Temple, the voices of the wind? And were the dead, who appeared in Jerusalem, also blown from their graves by the wind?

But the priests assured them: "We have sealed the 'seducer's' tomb; he shall no longer disturb our peace, and lead you away by his promises of the new 'Kingdom.'" They passed in silence over the contemptuous refusal of the governor to give them a fresh guard, saying: "Ye have guards; go and watch Him as ye know best." He would have nothing more to do with their victim.

But the usual festive joy in voice and bearing at the singing of the hymns of praise, and at the burning of the holocausts, was not revived. And, to accentuate the hollowness of the ceremonial, there rang a deep and dread note of self-accusation in the public confession of their guilt, and a strain of despair in the public petition for pardon, which sounded like a threat against heaven. The high priest dipped a tuft of white wool in the blood of the victims upon the altar, and fastened it, according to custom, to the column of Forgiveness. But when he returned after the holocaust was burnt, which had filled the courts with an unwholesome odor, instead of its smoke ascending in fragrant clouds to the dome, he found the little bundle still dripping with the blood: it had not turned white, as had heretofore been done to indicate God's forgiveness. The people witnessed the

distress in the face of Caiphas, and divining the cause, left the Temple and its rejected offerings in dismay. The Temple was desecrated: had the Almighty withdrawn His glory from the Holy of Holies, and His mercy from His people? Many struck their breasts, repeating the words of Daniel to their neighbors as they departed from the House of God: "And in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."¹

The greatest feast-day was turned into a day of gloom. Groups of sour-visaged Scribes gathered about the street corners, intent upon infusing cheerfulness into the chilled hearts of Jerusalem's children, or to warn them against ascribing the failure of the festal worship to the death of the "Galilean pretender." "If he had been of God," they protested, "God would have delivered him out of our hands. He said indeed, that he would rise on the third day; but we have precluded the possibility of his disciples foisting a fresh error upon the ignorant: we have sealed his tomb, and placed a guard over it. Wait and see, whether he hath not blasphemed." They were still challenging Him to prove that they had not killed Him unjustly!

Rhode, who was passing one of the groups in the company of Miriam and Callidora, just as Sapphias, one of the most distinguished Scribes, was holding forth in such strain to a doubting audience, fell behind her companions unnoticed, and listened. She had never shown either fear or respect of the wisdom or power of the hypocritical fraternity. She was a stranger to these people, as everyone noticed at sight of her; for she did not deem it good taste to conceal her fair face and blue eyes in the folds of her veil, which she usually wore about her neck, instead of covering with it her luxuriant light hair. But she being a mere child in the innocence of her whole bearing and appearance, nobody thought of molesting her, especially as she was not bound

¹ Dan. 9, 27.

by the customs of the land to imitate the manner of the native maidens.

Her large blue eyes sparkled with the desire of combat, when she heard the big, overfed lawyer ridicule the Master's prediction of His resurrection. As soon as he paused for breath, and cast his beady black eyes over his audience for signs of assent and applause, she raised herself on her toes at the edge of the small gathering, and having caught the speaker's eye, violently shook her head and her right hand at him in evident denial of his assertions, and as a challenge for a discussion.

At such audacity from the white-headed stranger who had been seen weeping at the feet of the crucified "Galilean," Sapphias Ben Hanan grew purple with rage. He snapped his fingers at her, signifying his utter contempt, and beckoning her to go away. But she remained, cool, calm, and smiling. The bystanders now directed their attention towards her, and opening a passage for her, passed her into the very hands of the irate teacher, one handing her lithe form to the other.

Sapphias laid his fat hands on her shoulders, and glared into her placidly gleaming eyes. She seemed to gain composure with the approach of evil. "Daughter of Beelzebub," the lawyer growled, "darest thou revile the princes of Israel! What wouldst thou of me? Thinkest thou that the carcass of the blasphemer shall reassume the breath of life?"

But Rhode was not intimidated. "I know not," she replied, "why thou dishonorest my father, who is a soldier, with the disrespectful¹ title of the devil; for the devil is the prince of darkness: how can I be his daughter, seeing that I am fair as the skin of Solomon?" At this apt quotation from the Song of Solomon, the faces of the surrounding Jews began to brighten up a little with admiration of her

¹ Beelzebub: the "God of Flies."

wit. Sapphias had missed the mark, and betrayed his disappointment by a deeper hue suffusing his face.

"Answer me," he resumed angrily; "answer me, whether I have not said truly, that he was a seducer!"

"To what has He seduced *thee?*" she replied, smiling ingenuously in his face. One of the bystanders, a young man, who had eyed the beautiful maid with more than idle curiosity, laughed aloud. The others grinned, and pulled at their belts and sashes with both hands in breathless expectation of the next volley. But they were not unfriendly to the wary maiden.

"Answer me: Ay, or nay!"

"Nay!" she said, smiling.

"Blasphemy! Blasphemy!" the Scribe shouted; "he taught the people that he was the Anointed of the Lord, the Son of God! And all who consent to his assertion blaspheme alike."

He raised his hand to strike her a blow in the face; but she declined, stepping back alertly into the group, which instantly closed about her, and said to him:

"Sapphias, I will make a pact with thee: On the morrow I will present myself at this place, and bring a stout lash; if the Prophet of Nazareth be not risen to-morrow at this hour, thou shalt lay the scourge on my bare shoulders forty times according to your law; but if He be risen, if His sealed and guarded tomb be empty, thou shalt kneel in this spot, and raising thy hands to heaven, shalt say: 'Jesus of Nazareth, whom we have crucified, is in truth the Son of God, the rejected King of the Jews.' And let our covenant stand in the witness of these men."

She had spoken very earnestly. The men among whom she was standing applauded her proposal; but Sapphias Ben Hanan turned pale, and walked away. Rhode also went her way, following her companions, who were waiting for her at a short distance, for a while much concerned about

the issue of her bold attack on the angry Scribe. The witnesses of the scene sent various half-hearted compliments after her, and the youth who had taken such deep interest in her flatteringly called her "a belated Deborah."¹

Thus the general tone of the conversation in public was one of suppressed expectancy and anxiety. If only the next day were over! The manifestations of Heaven's own interest in the moment of His death made it seem not wholly impossible, even to His implacable murderers, that His prediction, definite and distinct, of His own resurrection, might after all be fulfilled. Messengers were hurrying between the tomb and the houses of Annas and Caiphas, to advise the high priests of any possible untoward happening at the burial place of the Man whose power they dreaded even more now than when He moved under their eyes. "But," they soothed themselves, "if His grave bears a secret, it shall remain buried with Him; only one more day of dread: if He rise later than on the third day, His prophecy can easily be proved to be false."

The night passed quietly and peacefully. Toward morning, a little before sunrise, the last message had been received, that "all was well" at the dreaded tomb. The approaching dawn revived the wilted courage of the leaders, and spread the grin of scorn and contempt over their happy faces. A current of new life seemed to flow through the land in the wake of the soft morning wind; the first blush of the eastern sky seemed rosier and ruddier than usual; already the sun shot its first golden shafts over the summits of the eastern hills: "All's well!" exclaimed Caiphas from the roof of his house, where he had stationed himself to watch the rising of the sun — but the next moment the house trembled under a sudden shock; and a flash of light like lightning rent the sky, and lit up the garden of Joseph, the site of the Prophet's tomb: the earth seemed to have foundered in its course, and

¹ Judges, 4, 4.

to rear up an instant, and Caiphas was almost pitched headlong from his station to the ground. At the same instant the sun lifted up its gold-crowned brow over the crests of the Judean hills, and flooded the regions about with streams of golden splendor.

The sudden tremor and rebound of the earth roused Jerusalem to fresh terrors. The frightened inhabitants, only half clad, and confused, poured into the streets, anxiously inquiring of each other, what it could portend. But before they had time to collect their thoughts, the soldiers, who had been stationed at the tomb, came running to the city and shouting from afar:

“He is risen! His tomb is empty!”

Upon being pressed for detail, they related, between gasps, how a man in white garments had descended from the sky like a flash of brilliant light, so that they were struck blind with the splendor of his presence, and had removed the stone door from the mouth of the grave:

“When we opened our eyes again, we saw him sitting on the stone before the empty tomb; and we have fled.”

The confusion of the people and the consternation of the leaders knew no bounds. Annas and Caiphas received the soldiers with an undecided scowl:

“Why have ye fled?” Caiphas raved; “Ye sons of superstition! He is *not* risen! Ye know not whereof ye speak!”

But the soldiers reasserted that they had seen His tomb empty, and a heavenly guard stationed at its entrance; and neither threat nor promise could persuade them to change a jot or tittle of their unanimous and earnest asseverations. When Caiphas saw that they could not be imposed upon, he gave them a large sum of money, and enjoined upon them: “Say not: ‘He is risen’; but: ‘While we were asleep, His disciples came, and removed the body.’”— But who had seen His disciples these last days?

In Jerusalem the new version found little credence; even

the governor laughed it out of countenance, the tale bearing such evident earmarks of corruption that he forebade the soldiers to spread it further thereafter, as derogatory to the reputation of the Roman legions. "You make yourselves the object of the ridicule of the land," he said to them, "if you assert that you witnessed the theft of His body with closed eyes; and the object of the contempt of your legion, if you admit that you slept at your post. Let Annas and Caiphas look to it, how they may shake this last fatal shaft out of their flesh; but you, legionaries of Rome, do not play mischief at their behest! My soul rejoiceth now, that I am innocent of the blood of this just man." But at the last words his satisfaction was turned to anger and embarrassment.

Miriam had gone out to visit the tomb even before sunrise, carrying precious spices with which to anoint the body of the Master. Her sorrow had not yet been soothed; the infamy and cruelty of the crucifixion had wiped out all other remembrances from her mind. On the way she was troubled about the size of the stone, as it loomed into view at the mouth of the sepulcher. Then she and her companions felt the rude shock of the earthquake, and saw the flash of light dart to the earth. They also met the fugitive watchmen, hurrying by toward the city; but they did not connect these strange signs of some unusual event with the resting place of the ignominiously slaughtered Master, even when they saw the stone had been rolled away from the mouth of the grave; for the grave was not the Master's own, but had been lent to him by Joseph, who might possibly have had the body transferred. The women knew nothing of the distressing misgivings of Annas and Caiphas and their arrangements for the watch over his grave.

Miriam, however, hastened her steps, and arriving at the open cave before her companions, found it empty. The disappointment of her last hope, of giving one more proof

of her enduring love, was so bitter that the tears, scarcely dried, started afresh in her eyes. But as if it were possible that His body had not been bestowed in the stone-bed, her exceeding love prompted her to stoop, and look into the sepulcher; and, lo! there were sitting two comely youths in white raiment, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of the Master had been laid. They said to her: "Woman, why weepest thou?"

And she replied:

"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

When she had said this, she arose, and retreated from the opening of the grave. A man had come up behind her, whom she did not recognize with her tear-bedimmed eyes. He addressed her kindly:

"Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?"

But she answered sorrowfully:

"Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Then the stranger said with ineffably gentle reproof: "Miriam!"

It was the Master's voice.

She uttered a shout of joy: "Rabboni!"¹ and cast herself in rapture of love and adoration at the glorious Victor's feet.

¹ "Good Master mine."

THE END



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